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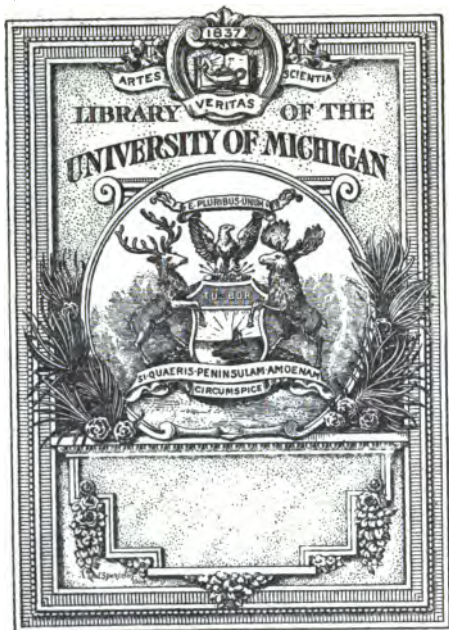
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THE SHADOW OF THE SWORD

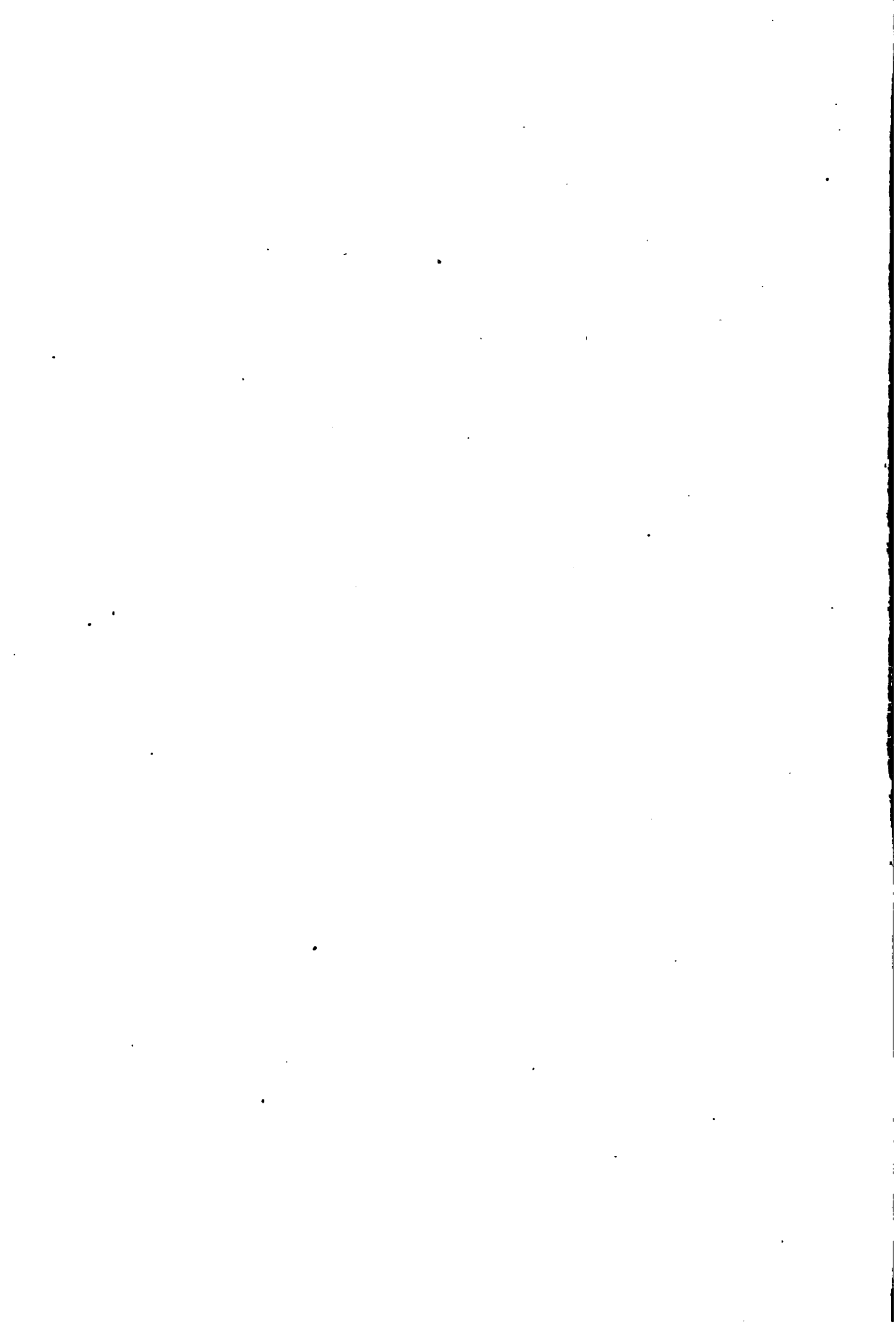


ROBERT BUCHANAN.



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THE  
SHADOW OF THE SWORD.

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A Romance.

BY  
*William*  
ROBERT BUCHANAN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

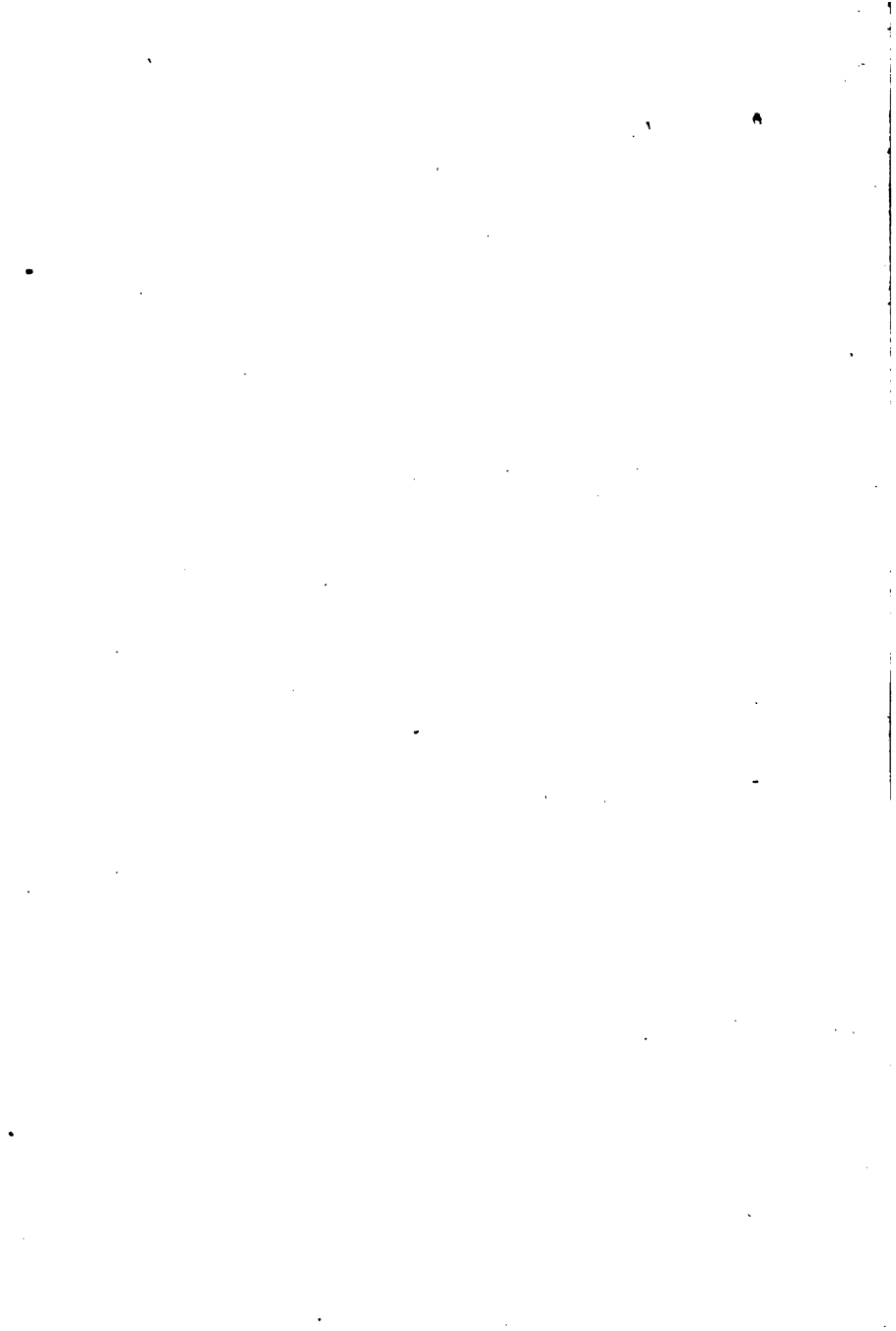
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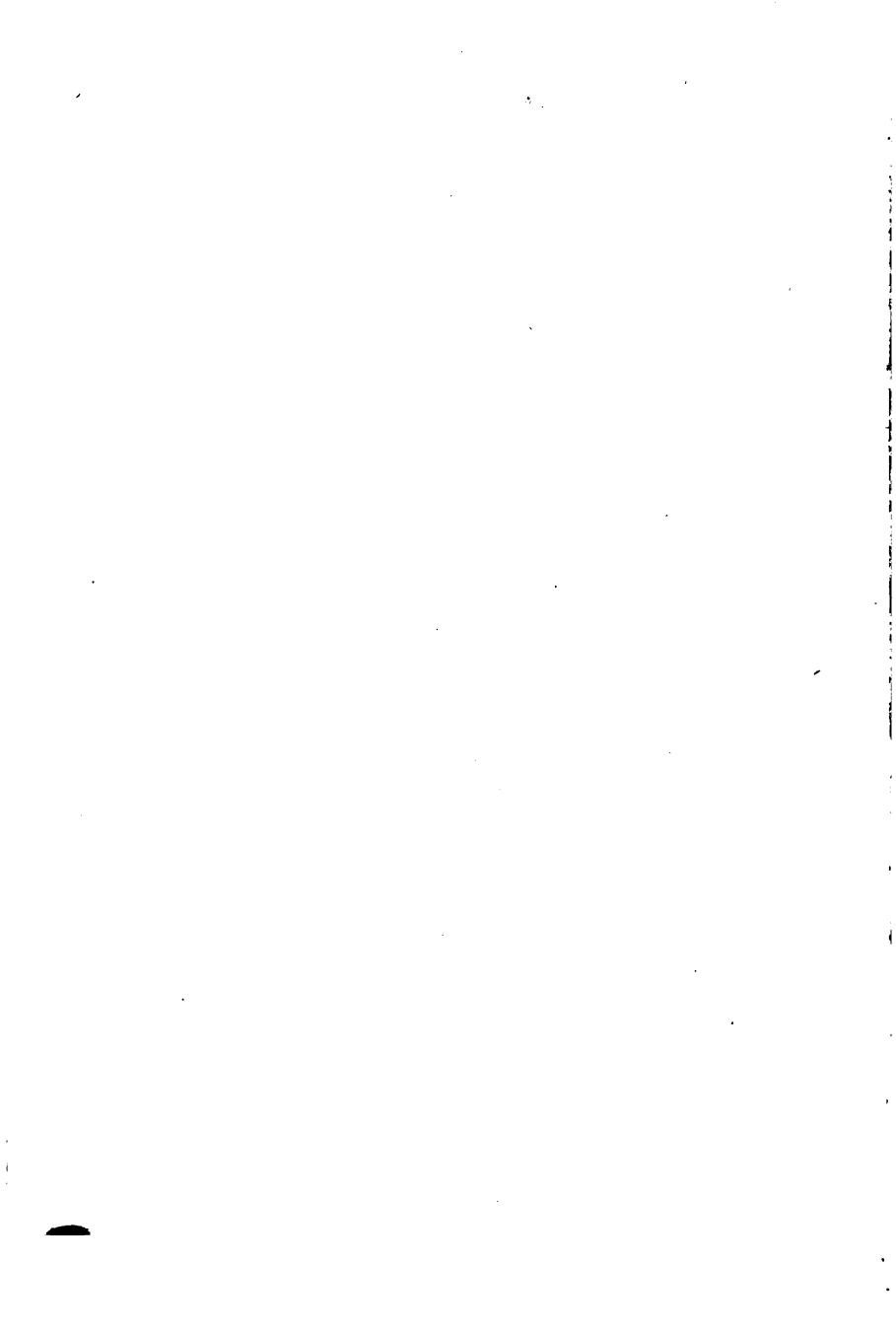
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# THE SHADOW OF THE SWORD.



## CHAPTER I.

### THE MIRAGE OF LEIPSIC.

**S**LOWLY, swinging in the darkness, Rohan descended the face of the cliff until he reached the narrow place of shingle below, on which the troubled tide was momentarily creeping ; and suddenly the moonlight came out anew upon the Cathedral, flooding its weedy walls and watery floor with streams of liquid silver. The wind still shrieked and moaned, and the sea roared terribly without the Gate ; but within the Cathedral there was a solemn

calm, as in some consecrated temple made by hands.

Slipping down upon the wet shingle, and involuntarily looking from side to side in dread of a pursuer, Rohan saw the sea rushing in through the Gate with a roar like thunder and a snow-white flash of foam; and the waters as they entered boiled in eddies, whirling round and round while the great far-away heart of the ocean uplifted them in one throbbing pulsation till they washed and splashed wildly against the dripping walls. Overhead the moving heavens, roofing the great Cathedral, were sailing past, drifting and changing, brightening and darkening, in one wild rush of wavelike shades and gleams. So loud was the tumult that it would have drowned a strong man's shriek as easily as an infant's cry.

But the light of the moon increased, illuming the boiling surge within the Gate and creeping onward until it touched the very feet of the fugitive. Rohan shivered, as if a cold hand had been laid on his

shoulder; for the rays fell luminously on something horrible—on a white face upturned to the sky.

He drew back with a shudder. After a moment he looked again. The face was still there, touched by the glimmering fingers of the moon; and half resting on the shingle, half submerged in the waters of the still rising tide, was the body of a man.

One of the great rocks hurled down by Rohan in his mad fury had struck the creature down; hence, doubtless, that wild shriek of horror which had arisen from his pursuers before they fled. The rock still lay upon the man's crushed breast, for death had been instantaneous. One white hand glimmered from beneath, while the awful face looked with open eyes at heaven.

Words cannot depict, human language is too weak to represent, the feelings which at that moment filled the soul of Rohan Gwenfern. A dull, dumb sensation, morally the analogue of the physical feeling of intense cold, numbed and for the time being paralyzed his faculties; so that he staggered and almost

fell ; and his own heart seemed crushed under a load like the rock upon the dead man's breast. Fire flashed before his eyes, with a horrid glimmer of blood. He was compelled to lean his head against the crag, breathing hard like a thing in mortal pain.

His first wild emotions of wrath and bloodthirst had worn away, now that his enemies were no longer near to fan the fierce flames to fury. The Battle was over, and he was the Victor, standing alone upon the field ; and at his feet, the Slain.

If at that moment his persecutors had returned he might have renewed the fray, have struck again, and have been thenceforth insensible to blood ; but it had been so willed that his victory should be complete as well as single ; his enemies would not return that night, and they had left behind them, glimmering solitary in the moonlight, their dead !

Bear in mind that Rohan, like all men of his race and religion, had been familiar with Death before, under other and more beautiful conditions. The gentle sleep of

men and women dying in their beds; the low farewell of wearied-out old age, blest by the Church and consecrated by the priest—these he knew well; and he had loved to hear the solemn music of the Celtic dirge sung round the shrouded forms of those who had passed away under natural circumstances. His hands were bloodless then. He had now to realize, under the fullest and most terrible of conditions, the presence of the cold Phantom as it appears to the eyes of murderers and of uninitiated men upon the battle-field. He had now to conceive, with a horrible and sickening fascination, that his hands had destroyed that strangest and solemnest of mysteries—a breathing, moving human life.

True, he was vindicated by the circumstance that he had merely stricken in self-defence; but what is circumstance to one whose soul, like Rohan Gwenfern's, is fashioned of stuff as sensitive as the feelers of the gleaming medusæ of the ocean? For him there was but one perception. A blinding white light of agony arose before him. He,

whose heart was framed of gentleness, whose nature was born and bred in love and kindness, he out of whose hand the lamb ate and the dove fed, who had never before destroyed any creature with life, not even the helpless sea-birds of the crags, had now done dreadful murder, had hurried into eternity the miserable soul of a fellow man. For him, for Rohan Gwenfern, there was no vindication. Life was poisoned to him; the air he breathed was sick and sacrificial. This, then, was the end of all his dreams of love and peace!

The clouds drifted above him with flying gleams of moonlight, the wind shrieked and the sea roared with hollow cannonade beyond the Gate, as, partially recovering his self-possession, he stooped down to look at the face of the murdered man. In his terror he was praying that he might recognize some bitter enemy—Mikel Grallon, for example,—and thus discover a partial justification for his own deed. The first look made him despair. The man wore uniform, and his hair and beard were quite white. It was

Pipriac himself, gazing with a bloodless face at heaven!

Strangely enough, he had never, although Pipriac led the besieging party, looked upon him in the light of a deadly foe. He had been his father's boon-comrade; under all his fierce swash-buckler air, there had ever existed a certain rude generosity and *bon-homie*; and after all he had only been doing his duty in attempting to secure a deserter dead or alive. In his own mind, moreover, Rohan knew that Pipriac would cheerfully have winked at his escape, had such escape been possible.

Death gives strange dignity to the commonest of faces, and the features of the old Sergeant look solemn and venerable in their fixed and awful pallor. The moon rises high over the Cathedral, within which the tide has now grown calm; but the waters, the deep ululation of which fills the air, have now reached to Rohan's feet. Above, the mighty crags rise black as jet, save where at intervals some space of moist granite



flashes in the changeful light. . . . Rohan listens. Far overhead there is a sound like human voices, dying faintly away.

And now, old Pipriac, all thy grim jokes and oaths are over, all thy voice is hushed for ever, and the frame that once strutted in the sunshine floats idly as a weed in the shallows of the tide. Bottle of red wine or flask of corn brandy will never delight thee more. Thou, too, hast fallen at thy post with many a thousand better men, in the cause of the great Colossus who bestrides the world; and though thy fall has been inglorious and far away from all the splendours of the busy field, thou hast fulfilled thine allotted task, my veteran, as truly as any of the rest. After all, thou wast a good fellow, and thy heart was kindly, though thy tongue was rough. So at least thinks Rohan Gwèrfern, as he bends above thee, looking sadly in thy face.

Ah God, to kill!—to quench the living spark in howsoever base a heart it burns! To strike down the quivering life, to let loose the sad and perhaps despairing soul! Better

to be dead like Pipriac, than to be looking down with this agony of the heart, as Rohan is looking now.

The heavy rock still lies on Pipriac's breast ; but now, stooping softly, Rohan lifts it in his arms and casts it out into the tide. The corpse, freed from its load, washes upward and swings from side to side as if it lived, and turning over on its stomach, floats face downward at Rohan's feet. And now the place where Rohan stands is ankle-deep, and the tide has yet another hour to rise. With one last despairing look at the dead man, Rohan turns away, and slowly, with feet and hands that tremble in the fissures of the rock, reascends to the Cave above.

Scarcely has he reached his old position when his sense is once more attracted by the sound of voices far above him. He starts, listening intently, and looks upward. Then, for the first time, the reality of his situation returns upon him, and he remembers the consequences of his own deed. Though he has slain a man in self-defence, rather than become an authentic and accredited slayer of

men, his act, in the eye of the law, is murder, and doubtless, sooner or later, he will have to die a murderer's death.

Stooping over from the Cave, he gazes down on the spot where he so lately stood. The floor of the Cathedral is now completely covered, and there, glimmering in one gleaming patch of moonlight, is the sight he dreads. He utters a wild cry of agony and despair and falls upon his knees.

Hear him, O merciful God, for he is praying! Have pity, and hearken to his entreaty, for he is in Thy hand! Ah, but this wild cry which rises on the night is not a gentle prayer for pity or for mercy; say rather, it is a frantic wail for redress and for revenge. "I have been innocent in this thing, O God; not on my head be the guilt, but on his who hunted me down and made me what I am; on him whose red Sword shadows all the world, on him who points Thy creatures on to doom, let the just retribution fall! As he has curst my days, be his accurst; and spare him not, O God!" Even thus, not in such speech, but with the same annihilating

thought, prays—or curses—Rohan Gwenfern. Then, rising wildly to his feet, careless now of his life, he follows the dizzy path that leads up the face of the cliffs.

\* \* \* \* \*

The date of that night is memorable. It was the 19th of October, 1813.

The circumstance which we are now about to relate is variously given by those familiar with Rohan Gwenfern's life-history. Some, among the more credulous and superstitious, believe that the man actually on that occasion beheld an apocalyptic vision ; others, although admitting that he seemed to see such a vision, affirm that it must have been merely mental and psychical, due to the wanderings of a naturally wild and temporarily conscience-stricken imagination ; while the purely sceptical, forming a small minority, go the length of affirming that the fancy only occurred to the man in after years, when mind and memory were so confused as to blend all associations into one extraordinary picture. Be that as it may, the story, resting on the solemn testimony of the man himself,

asserts that Rohan Gwenfern, as he fled upward that night from the scene of his conflict and left the body of Pipriac floating in the sea below him, was suddenly arrested by a miraculous Mirage in the heavens.

The moon had passed into a cloud, whence, as from the folds of a transparent tent, her light was diffused over the open sky; tumultuously, in troubled masses, the vapours still continued to drift in the direction in which the wind was blowing; when suddenly, as if at the signal of a Hand, the wind ceased, the clouds stood still, and there was silence both in sky and sea. This terrible silence only lasted for a moment, during which Rohan hung his head in horrible expectation. Gazing up once more, he saw the forms of heaven again in motion; and lo! they had assumed the likeness of mighty Armies tumultuously passing overhead. The vision grew. He saw the flashing of steel, the movement of great bodies of men,—the heavy squadrons of soldiers on foot, the dark *silhouette* of the artillery rapidly drawn!

The Mirage extended. The whole heavens

became as the moonlit earth, crossed by moving bodies of men, and strewn with dead and dying ; and in the heart of heaven was a great river, through which the tumultuous legions came.

Clear and distinct, yet ghostlike and unreal, the Shapes passed by ; and far away as the faces loomed he seemed to see each one distinctly, like that dead face from which he was flying. Presently, however, all his faculties became absorbed in the contemplation of one Form which rose gigantic, close to the semi-lucent cloud which veiled the moon.

It sat on horseback, cloaked and hooded, with one hand pointing onward ; and though its outline was gigantic, far exceeding that of any human thing, its face seemed that of a man. He saw the face clearly, white as marble, cold as death.

Slowly, as a cloud moves, this Form passed across the heavens ; and all around it the flying legions gathered, pointed on in flight by the index finger of its hand ; but the head was dejected, the chin drooped upon the

breast, and the eyes, cold and pitiless, looked down in still despair. Awe-stricken, amazed, Rohan stood stretching his hands upwards with a cry, for the lineaments on which he gazed seemed almost godlike, and the Form too seemed divine. But as he looked the features took another likeness and grew terribly familiar, until he recognized the face which had so long haunted his life and which the white Christ had once revealed to him in dream!

Column after column moved past, the whole heavens were darkened, and in their midst, satanic and commanding, moved the Phantom of Bonaparte.

It was the 19th of October, 1813, and at that very moment the French armies were in full retreat from Leipsic—with Bonaparte at their head.





## CHAPTER II.

“HOME THEY BROUGHT THEIR WARRIOR DEAD.”

**W**HEN the besieging party returned to the Cathedral they found the body of the Sergeant stranded high and dry near the Gate. Not without fear and trembling, they again placed their ladders against the wall, and mounting without opposition searched the Cave. However, not a trace of Rohan was to be found; horror-stricken, doubtless, at his own deed, he had fled—whither they knew not, nor did they greatly care just then to know, for the death of Pipriac had filled them with terror and amaze. By this time dawn had come and the storm had ceased. Dejectedly enough, followed by a crowd of villagers, they



bore their burthen away—out through the Gate, up the stairs of St. Triffine, and along the green plateau towards the village. It was a sorrowful procession, for, with all his faults, the Sergeant was a favourite.

Passing underneath the bunch of mistletoe which hung as a sign over the door of the little *cabaret*, they bore in their burthen and placed it down on the great table which stood in the centre of the kitchen. Then Höel the *gendarme* took off his greatcoat and placed it over the corpse, covering the blood-stained face from sight. Poor old Pipriac! Many a morning had he swaggered into that kitchen to taste the widow Cloriet's brandy! Many a time had he smoked his pipe beside that kitchen fire! Many a time, also, with a wink of his one eye, had he wound his arm in tipsy affection round the waist of the red-haired waiting wench Yvonne! It was all over now, and there he lay, a statelier and more solemn figure than he had ever been in life; while the trembling widow, in honour of the sad occasion, distributed little cordial glasses all round.

The *cabaret* was soon full, for the dreadful news had spread far and wide. Ere long the little Priest, with a face as white as a sheet, entered in, and, kneeling by the dead man's side, said a long and silent prayer. When he had finished he rose to his feet and questioned the *gendarmes*.

"And the other—Rohan—where is he? Is he taken?"

The *gendarme* Hoël shook his head.

"He is not taken, and never will be taken, alive; we have searched the Cave, the cliffs; but the Fiend protects him, Father Rolland, and it is all in vain."

There was a loud murmur of astonishment and acquiescence.

"How did it all happen?" pursued the Priest. "You attempted to take him, and he struck in self-defence; but then?"

This was the signal for Hoël to launch forth into a long description of the latter part of the siege, during which he was ever and anon interrupted by his excited comrades. The consensus of testimony went to show that Rohan, in his maniacal resistance, had

neither been alone nor unassisted ; but that, in the shadow of the night, and amid the loudness of the storm, he had conjured to his aid the powers of darkness, whose hands had hurled down upon the besiegers fragments of rock far too huge to be uplifted by human strength. That he had sold himself to the Devil, who had formally undertaken to protect him from the Emperor, was a statement which received general affirmation. "Master Robert," it was well known, was ever on the look-out for such bargains ; and the belief that he had been leagued with the deserter against them flattered alike the vanity of the *gendarmes* and their superstition.

Down from his cottage stumped the old Corporal, followed by the remnant of his "Maccabees" ; and when he looked in the dead man's face his eyes were for a moment dim.

"Peace to his soul—he was a brave man!" ejaculated the veteran. "He did his duty to the Emperor, and the good God will give him his reward."

"And after all," said the Priest in a low

voice, "he died in fair fight, as it might be on the open field."

"That is not so," answered the Corporal firmly, looking very white round the edges of his mouth. "That is not so, *m'sieur le curé*, for he was foully murdered by a coward and a *chouan*, whom God will punish in his turn. Hear me—I say it, though the man was flesh and blood of mine."

The little *curé* shook his head dolefully.

"It is a sad thing, and it all comes, doubtless, of resisting the laws of the Emperor; but look you, it was a matter of life and death, and if he had not stricken in self-defence, he would have been taken and slain. After all, it was one man against many."

"One man!—a thousand Devils!" cried Hoël, unconsciously repeating his dead leader's favourite expression.

"He was wrong from the beginning," pursued the Priest moralizing. "One man cannot set the world right if it is in error; and it is one's place to obey the law, and to do one's duty to God and the Emperor. He would not obey, and now he has shed blood,

for which, alas! the good God will have a reckoning late or soon."

To such purpose, and in so many words, moralized Father Rolland; and those who heard shuddered and crossed themselves in fear. It occurred to no one present to reflect that Pipriac had fallen in fair war, in a war, moreover, in which he was the aggressor; and that Rohan Gwenfern was as justified in the sight of Heaven as any qualified licentiate of the art of killing. So strange a law is it of our human consciousness, that murder loses its horror when multiplied by twenty thousand! Those who would have calmly surveyed a battle-field strewn with dead could not regard one solitary corpse with equanimity. Those who would have adored Napoleon as a great man, who would have kissed his raiment-hem in reverence and tears, turned their hearts against Gwenfern as against some base and abominable creature.

"Aunt Loïz, it is all true! Pipriac is dead, and they have carried his body up yonder; but Rohan is yet alive. Yes, he has killed Pipriac."

"What could he do? It was a fight for life."

"And now no man will pity him, for there is blood upon his hands; and no man will give him bread or yield him shelter; and till he yields himself up no priest will shrive his poor soul and make his peace with God."

"Is that so, Marcelle?"

"Yes, they all say it is murder—even Father Rolland, who has a kind heart. But it is false, Aunt Loiz!"

"Of course it is false; for what could he do? It is they who are to blame, not he, not my poor persecuted boy. May the good God forgive him, for he struck in self-defence and he was mad. O my son, my son!"

They sat together in the cottage under the cliff, and they spoke, with sobs and tears, clinging to each other. The horror of Rohan's deed lay upon them like some frightful shadow. It seemed like horrible blasphemy to have struck down the emissary of the great Emperor; and they knew that for such a deed, however justifiable, there would be no mercy, and that for such a

murderer there would be no pity. Rohan was outlawed for ever, and every human hand would now be raised against him.

To them, as they sat together, came Jàn Goron, with more tidings of what was going on in the village. The *gendarmes*, furious and revengeful, had been searching the Cave and scouring the cliffs again, but not a trace of Rohan could now be found. In the darkness and confusion of last night's storm he had doubtless sought some other hiding-place.

"There is other news," said Goron, anxious to change the sad subject. "The King of Saxony has deserted the Emperor, and the armies of France have fallen back on Leipsic. Some say the Emperor is meeting his match at last, and that all the Kings are now against him. Well, he has eaten half a dozen Kings for breakfast before now, and will do so again."

At another time these tidings would have greatly excited Marcelle Derval; but now they seemed almost devoid of interest. The fortunes of France and the Emperor were

utterly forgotten in her individual trouble. However, she shrugged her pretty shoulders incredulously when Goron hinted at defeat, and said listlessly—

“At Leipsic, say you?—both Höel and Gildas will be there.” And she added in a low weary voice, “We had a letter from Gildas last week, and he has been three times under fire without so much as a scratch or a burn. He has seen the Emperor quite close, and he says he is looking very old. Höel, too, is well. . . Ah, God, if my Cousin Rohan were with them as he might have been, happy and well and strong, fighting for the Emperor!”

As she spoke her tears burst forth again, and Mother Gwenfern answered her with a bitter wail. Yes, this doubtless was the bitterest of all: the feeling that Rohan had been madly flying from a mere phantom, and that, had he quietly accepted his fate, he would still have been living honoured and happy, like Höel and Gildas. By doing his duty and becoming a brave soldier, he would have avoided all that series of troubles and



sins which had been the consequence of his resistance. Blood he might have shed, but only the blood of enemies; which, as all good patriots knew, would have been of small consequence! It was not for simple women like these to grasp the sublime truth that all men are brothers, and that even staunch patriots may wear the livery of Cain.

Night came on, black and stormy. The wind, which had fallen during the day, rose again, and heavens and seas were blindly blent together. In the cottage, which quaked with every blast and cowered before the fierce torrents of rain, Marcelle still lingered, having sent word home that she would not return that night.

The turf fire had burnt nearly out, and the only light in the hut was cast by a miserable lamp which swung from the rafters. Side by side, now speaking in whispers, now silent, the women sat on the rude form before the fire; feeling all the world against them, heart-broken, soul-stricken, listening to the elements that raved without and

echoed the hopeless wail of their own weary lives. Suddenly, above the roaring of the wind and the beating of the rain, they heard a sound without—something tapping at the pane.

Marcelle rose and listened. The sound was repeated, and followed by a low knocking at the door, the latch of which was secured for the night.

"Open!" cried a voice without.

Something in the sound woke a wild answer in their hearts. The mother rose to her feet, white as death; Marcelle tottered to the door and threw it open; and silently, swiftly, crouching like some hunted animal, a man crept in.

There was no need for one look, for one word, of recognition; swift as an electric flash the recognition came, in one mad leaping of the heart; and before they could grasp his hand or gaze into his face they knew it was he—the one creature they held dearest in the world.

Rapidly, with her characteristic presence of mind, Marcelle secured the door; then, while

Rohan ran shivering across to the nearly extinguished fire, she carefully drew the curtain of the window, closing all view from without. Then, too excited to speak, the women stood gazing with affrighted eyes at the new comer. Ragged and half naked, soaking and dripping, with his wild hair falling over his shoulders, and a beard of many weeks' growth covering his face, he stood, or rather crouched, before them, with his eyes on theirs.

Certainly the dark heavens that night did not look down on any creature more pitiable ; and most pitiable of all was the white light upon his face, the dull dead fire that burned in his eyes.

With no word or sign of greeting he gazed round him ; then, pointing with his hand, he cried, hoarsely—

“ Bread ! ”

Now for the first time they remembered that he was starving, and knew that the mad light in his face was the light of famine. Swiftly, without a word, Marcelle brought out food and placed it before him ; he seized it

fiercely, and devoured it like a wild beast. Then the mother's heart broke to see him eat. Kneeling by his side, while he was eagerly clutching food with his right hand, she took the other hand and covered it with kisses.

"O my son, my son!" she sobbed.

He did not seem to heed; all his faculties seemed absorbed in seeking sustenance, and his eyes only moved this way and that like a hungry hound's. When Marcelle brought brandy and placed it before him—he drank; then, and not till then, his eyes fell on hers with some sort of recognition, and he said, in a hard and hollow voice—

"Is it thou, Marcelle?"

She did not reply, but her eyes were blind with tears; then he laughed vacantly, and looked down at his mother.

"I was starving, and so I came; they are busy up there, and they will not follow; but if they do, I am ready. You have heard of Pipriac; the old fool has got his deserts, that is all! What a night!"

There was something in his tone so reck-

less, so distraught, that they almost shrank away from him, and ever and anon he gave a low mindless laugh, very painful to hear. Presently he gazed again at Marcelle, saying—

“You keep your good looks, little one; ah, but you have never known what it is to starve! But for the starvation, look you, it would all have been a good joke. See, I am worn to the bone—I have no flesh left—if you met me out of doors you would say I was a ghost. How you look at me! I frighten you, and no wonder, Marcelle Derval. Ah, God! you are afraid!”

“No Rohan, I am not afraid!” answered the girl, sobbing.

For a moment or two he looked fixedly at her, then his breast heaved painfully, and he held his hand upon his heart.

“Tell me, then,” he cried quickly, “why do you look at me like that? Do you hate me? Mother of God, answer! Do you hate me, *now?*”

“No, no!—God help you, Rohan!”

And she sank, still sobbing, at his feet;

and while the widow grasped one hand, she held the other, resting her head upon his knee. He sat spell-bound, like one between sleep and waking, while his frame was shaken with the sobs of his mother and his beloved. Suddenly he snatched his hands away.

"You are mad, I think, you women ; you do not know what you are touching ; you do not know whom you are embracing. God and men are against me, for I am a murderer, and for murderers there is no mercy. Look you, I have killed Pipriac, who was my father's friend. Ah, if you had seen—it was horrible ! The rock crushed in his breast like a crab's shell, and in a moment he was dead—old Pipriac, whom my father loved !"

Their answer was a low wail, but they only clung the closer to him, and both his hands were wet with tears. His own soul was shaken, and his feverish eyes grew dim and moist. Reaching out his trembling arms, he drew the women to him with a low heart-broken cry.

“Mother! Marcelle! You do not hate me, you are not afraid?”

They looked up into his face, and their features shone with that love which passeth understanding. The old worn woman and the pale beautiful girl alike looked up with the same passionate yearning, holding him the dearer for his sorrows, even for his sins. His eyes lingered most on the countenance of Marcelle; *her* devotion was an unexpected revelation. Then across his brain flashed the memory of all the happy past, and, hiding his face in his hands, he sobbed like a child, but almost without tears—for tears his famished heart was too dry.

Suddenly, while they watched him in awe and pain, his attitude changed, and he sprang wildly to his feet, listening with that fierce look upon his face which they at first had feared so much. Despite the sound of wind and rain, his quick ear had detected footfalls on the shingle outside the cottage.

Before they could say another word a knock came to the door.

“Put out the light!” whispered Marcelle;

and in a moment Rohan had extinguished the swinging lamp, which, indeed, had almost burnt out already. The cottage was now quite dark; and while Rohan, creeping across the floor, concealed himself in the blackest corner of the chamber, Marcelle crossed over to the door.

"Within there!" cried a voice. "Answer, I say! Will you keep a good Christian dripping here all night like a drowned rat?"

"You cannot enter," said Marcelle; "it is too late, and we are abed."

The answer was a heavy blow on the door, which was only secured by a frail latch.

"I know your voice, Marcelle Derval, and I have come all this way to find you out. I have news to tell you; so open at once. It is I, Mikel Grallon!"

"Whoever you are, go away!" answered Marcelle in agony.

"Go away? Not I, till I have seen and spoken with you. Open the door, or I will break it open—Ah!"

As he spoke, the man dealt heavy blows upon the frail woodwork, and suddenly, before



Marcelle could interfere, the latch yielded, and the door, to which there was no bolt, flew open. Mother Gwenfern uttered a scream, while amid a roar of wind and a shower of rain, Mikel Grallon entered in. But white as death Marcelle blocked up the entrance, and when the man's heavy form fell against her, pushed it fiercely back.

"What brings you here at this time, Mikel Grallon?" she demanded. "Stand still—you shall not pass another step. Ah, that Alain, or Jannick, or even my Uncle were here, you would not dare! Begone, or I shall strike you, though I am only a girl."

The reply was an imbecile laugh; and now for the first time Marcelle perceived that Grallon was under the influence of strong drink. His usually subdued and deliberate air was exchanged for one of impudent audacity, and his voice was insolent, threatening, and devil-may-care.

"Strike me!" he cried huskily; "I do not think your little hand will hurt much; but I know you do not mean it—it is only the way of you women. Ah, my little Mar-

celle, you and I understand each other, and it is all settled; it is all settled, and your uncle is pleased. Now that that coward of a cousin is done for, you will listen to reason—will you not, Marcelle Grallon? Ah, yes, for Marcelle Grallon sounds prettier than Marcelle Derval!"

Leering tipsily, he advanced, and before she could resist had thrown his arms around her; she struggled in his hold, and struck him with her clenched hand upon the face, but he only laughed. Strange to say, she uttered no cry. Her heart was too full of terror lest Rohan, whom she knew to be listening, should betray himself or be discovered.

"Let me go!" she said in a low intense voice. "In God's name, let me go!"

So saying, with a powerful effort, she shook herself free, while Grallon staggered forward into the centre of the room. Recovering himself with a fierce oath, he found himself face to face with Mother Gwenfern, who, with wild skeleton frame and gleaming eyes, stood before him like some weary ghost.

“Aha, you are there, mother!” he cried as his eyes fell upon her. “Well, I suppose you have heard all the news, and you know now what to think of your wretch of a son. He has killed a man, and when he is caught, which will be soon, he will be tortured like a dog. This is your reward for bringing cowards into the world, old woman. I am sorry for you, but it is you that are to blame.”

“Silence, Mikel Grallon!” said Marcelle, still terror stricken; “silence, and go away. For the love of the Virgin go away this night, and leave us in peace.”

She had come quite close to him as she spoke, and he again reached out his arms and seized her with a laugh.

“I have come down to fetch you back,” he said, “for you shall not sleep under this roof. As sure as you will be Marcelle Grallon you shall not stay; the home of a *chouan* and a coward is no place for you, and Mother Gwenfern knows that as well as I know it. Do not be obstinate, or I shall be angry—I, who adore you. Ah! you may struggle, but I have you fast.”

His arms were around her, and his hot face was pressed close to hers, when suddenly a hand interposed, and, seizing Grallon by the throat with terrific grip, choked him off. It was the work of a moment; and Grallon, looking up in stupefaction, found himself in the hold of a man who was gazing down upon him with eyes of murderous rage. Then his blood went cold with terror, for even in the dimness of the room he recognized Gwenfern.

"Help! the deserter! help!" he gasped; but one iron hand was on his throat, and another was uplifted to smite and bruise him down.

"Silence!" said Rohan, while the wretch groaned half strangled; then he said in a lower, more intense voice, "I have you now, Mikel Grallon. If you know a prayer say it quickly, for I mean to kill you. Ah, wretch! to you I owe so much that I have suffered; you have hunted me down like a dog, you have driven me mad with hunger and cold, but now it is my turn. Pipriac is dead, but you are more guilty than Pipriac, and you shall follow him to-night."

Grallon struggled and gasped for breath; sober now through sheer excess of terror, he glared up at his captor and writhed in vain to set himself free. It would doubtless have gone ill with him, had not the two women interfered and called in agonized tones upon Rohan not to take his life. The sound of their beseeching voices seemed to allay the fury in Rohan's breast and to call him to a sense of his own danger. He threw off Grallon, and made a movement as if to approach the door.

At this juncture Grallon, finding himself free, and seeing Rohan about to escape, had the indiscretion to interfere once more.

"Help!—the deserter!—help!" he shrieked in a loud voice.

Before he could repeat the alarm Rohan had turned again upon him, uplifted him in his powerful arms, and dashed him down with great force upon the hard earthen floor, where he lay senseless as if dead. Then Rohan, with one last look at his mother and Marcelle; passed out through the door and disappeared into the night.



## CHAPTER III.

“A CHAPEL OF HATE.”

**I**N the autumn of 1813, it was wild weather out in the great world where Emperors and Kings were wildly struggling in a grasp of death. On earth, were the red shadows of armies; in heaven, were the black shadows of rain; and the wind blew these and those to and fro on the faces of earth and heaven, so that the eye looked in vain this way and that for a spot of sunshine and peace. The great Tidal Wave which had deluged Europe with blood was at last subsiding, and the strand was strewn with the wreck of empires and kingdoms and the great drifts of dead.

Through this general storm, physical as well as political, Bonaparte was rapidly re-treating on France: before him, the startled faces of his people; behind him, the angry murmur of his foes; and at every step he took the way darkened and the situation became more dire. Nevertheless, if chronicle is to be trusted, his face was calm, his mien composed. The fifty thousand Frenchmen lost at Leipsic sent no spectres to trouble him; or, if the spectres came, he waved them down! Spectres of the living—mad famished Frenchmen, who made hideous riot wherever they came—preceded and followed him: scarecrows of his old glory and his old renown. In this wise he came to Erfurt, where, so few years before, he had presided at the memorable Congress of Kings.

Things were indeed changed—even in the man's own soul. He could not fail to foresee—for he was not destitute of prophetic vision—that this was only the beginning of the end. One by one the powers of the earth had fallen away from him, and, like Death on his white steed, he was riding he knew

not whither—shadows around and behind him; and above him, still, the Shadow of the Sword.

On the 25th of October, says the chronicler, he left Erfurt, "amid weather as tempestuous as his fortunes."

It was wild weather, too, down in lonely Brittany, and in all the quiet old hamlets, set, like Kromlaix, by the sea. Black mists charged with rain brooded night and day over the great marshes, and over the desolate plains and moors; and the salt scum and foam blew inland for miles, bringing rumours of the watery storm. Kromlaix crouched and trembled, looking seaward; and deep under its steep street a voice murmured—the hidden river moaning as it ran.

On a dark afternoon the solitary figure of a man struggled across the great plain which stretches within the high sea-wall to the north of Kromlaix. With few landmarks to guide him, and these few looming confusedly through a grey vapour of thin rain, he was proceeding slowly in the direction of the



village, which was still several miles away. The wind had been rising all day, and was blowing half a gale, while mountains of rain-charged vapour were rising ever upward from the sea. He was an old man, and with wind and rain beating furiously in his face he made but little way. Again and again, to avoid the fury of the blast, he almost crouched upon the ground.

He was thinly clad, in the peasant costume of the country; on his back he carried a bag resembling a beggar's wallet, and he leant for support upon an oaken staff.

At every step he took the storm deepened and the darkness grew, until he veritably seemed walking through the clouds. Ever and anon wild cattle, rushing for shelter, passed like ghosts across his path; or some huge pile of stone glimmered and disappeared. At last, he stood confused and undecided, with a sound in his ears like the roaring of the sea. Just then he discerned, looming through the vapour, the outline of a building which stood alone in the very centre of the waste. Eager to find

shelter, he hurried towards it, and soon stood before the door.

The building was a ruin; the four walls, with a portion of the roof, being intact, but door and windows had long since been swept away—perhaps by human hands in the days of the Revolution. The walls were black and stained with the slime of centuries. Above the doorway, but half obliterated, were these words written 'in antique characters—*"Notre Dame de la Haine"*; in English, *"Our Lady of Hate."*

For the moment the traveller hesitated; then, with a peculiar smile, he quietly entered. Just within the doorway was a stone form, on which he sat down, well screened from the storm, and surveyed the interior of the Chapel.

For Chapel it was, though seemingly deserted and forsaken; and such buildings still stand in Brittany, as ghastly reminders of what, in its darkest frenzy, religion is capable of doing. Nor was it so forsaken as it seemed. Hither still, in hours of passion and pain, came men and women to cry curses

on their enemies : the maiden on her false lover, the lover on his false mistress, the husband on his false wife ; praying one and all, that Our Lady of Hate might hearken, and that the hated one might die " within the year." So bright and so deep had the gentle Christian light shone within their souls ! Many, as their own passions, were the names of the Mother of God ; and this one of Lady of Hate was surely as sweet to them as that other—Mother of Love.

The interior of the Chapel was dark with vapours and shadows. At the further end, which was quite roofless, loomed a solitary window, and through this the rain was wildly beating : striking in pitilessly on a mutilated stone image of Our Lady, which still stood on its pedestal within the space where the altar once had been ;—a dreary image, formless and deformed ; rudely hewn of coarse stone, and now marred almost beyond recognition. Yet that Our Lady's power had not altogether fled, or rather that firm faith in that power still remained, was attested by the rude gifts scattered at her

feet: strings of black beads, common rosaries, coarse locket<sup>s</sup> of brass and tin, even fragments of ribbon and scraps of human attire. One of these locket<sup>s</sup> was quite new, and held a lock of human hair. Woe to the head on which that hair grew, should Our Lady hear the prayer of her who placed it there!

The floor of the Chapel had been paven, but few of the slabs remained. Everywhere grew long grass, nettles, and weeds, dripping with the rain; at the ruined altar the nettles and weeds grew breast high, touching Our Lady's feet, and climbing up as if to cover her from human sight; but at the front of the altar was a paven space, where men and women might kneel.

The old man glanced into the dreary place, and sighed; then taking his wallet from his back and opening it, he drew forth a piece of black bread and began to eat. He had scarcely begun, when he was startled by a sound as of a human voice, coming from the interior of the chapel; peering through the darkness, he failed to distinguish any human form, but immediately after, on the sound

being repeated, he rose and walked towards the altar, and beheld, stretched on the ground before the stone image, the figure of a man.

Face downward, like a man asleep or in a swoon; with the heavy rain pouring down upon him from the window above; moaning and murmuring as he lay;—an object more forlorn it was scarcely possible to conceive; for his rags scarcely covered his nakedness, his wild unkempt hair swept to his shoulders, and he seemed stained from head to foot with the clammy moisture of the storm.

As the old man approached and bent above him, he did not stir; but when, with a look of recognition, the old man stooped and touched him, he sprang to his feet like a wild beast, and, as if awakened from stupor, glared all round with bloodshot eyes. His face was so wild and terrible, covered with its matted hair and beard, and the light in his eyes was so fierce, yet so vacant and woe-begone, that the old man shrunk back startled.

“Rohan!” he said, in a low voice, “Rohan Gwenfern!”

The arms of Rohan, which had been

outstretched to clutch and tear, dropped down to his side, and his eyes rolled wildly on the speaker. Gradually the feline expression faded from his face, but the woe-begone light remained.

"Master Arfoll!"

It was indeed the itinerant schoolmaster, little changed, though somewhat greyer and sadder than when we last saw him. He stretched out his arms, and with both hands grasped the right hand of Rohan, looking tenderly into his face. Not a word more was uttered for some minutes, but the powerful frame of Rohan shook with agitation.

"You live! you live!" at last exclaimed Master Arfoll. "Over there, at Travnik, there was a report that you were dead, but I did not believe it, and I hoped on. Thank God, you live!"

Such life as lingered in that tormented frame seemed scarce worth thanking God for. Better to have died, one would have thought, than to have grown into this—a ghost—

“A shadow,  
Upon the skirts of human nature dwelling.”

All wild and persecuted things are pitiful to look on, but there is no sadder sight on earth than the face of a hunted man.

Presently, Master Arfoll spoke again.

“I was going through Kromlaix, and I came hither to shelter from the storm. Of all the places on the earth to find you here! Ah, God, it is an evil place, and those who come here have evil hearts. What were you doing, my Rohan? Praying?—To Notre Dame de la Haine!”

Rohan, whose eyes had been fixed upon the ground, looked up quickly and answered, “Yes!”

“Ah, you have great wrongs, and your enemies have been cruel indeed. May God help you, my poor Rohan!”

A sharp expression of scorn and semi-delirium passed over Rohan's face.

“It is not God I ask,” he answered in a hollow voice, “not God, but her! None can help me now if she cannot. Look you, I have prayed here again and again. I have

torn my heart out in prayer against the Emperor—in curses on his head, that she may hunt him down." Suddenly turning to the altar, and stretching out his hands, he cried, "Mother of God, hear me! Mother of Hate, listen! Within a year, within a year!"

A new access of passion possessed him; his face flashed white as death, and he seemed about to cast himself again on the stones before the altar. But Master Arfoll stretched out his hands again, and touched him gently on the shoulder.

"Let us sit down and talk together," he said softly. "There is news. I have bread in my wallet and a little red wine;—let us eat and drink together as in old times, and you shall hear all I know."

Something in the manner of the speaker subdued and soothed Rohan, who suffered himself to be led across the Chapel to the stone seat close to the door. Here the two men sat down side by side. By this time the Chapel had grown quite dark, but, although the wind blew more furiously than ever, the rain had almost ceased to fall.



Little by little, the excitement of Rohan was subdued. Gently pressed to eat, he did so automatically, and it was evident that he was sadly in need of sustenance. Then Master Arfoll drew forth a leathern bottle, which had been filled with wine that morning by a farmer's wife whose children he had been teaching. Rohan drank, and his pale cheek kindled; but by this time all his passion had departed, and he was docile as a child.

Gradually Master Arfoll elicited from him many particulars of his position. After several days passed in the open plains and among the great salt marshes, he had at last returned again to the Cave of St. Gildas, whence, in a sort of delirium, he had issued that day to pray, or rather to curse, in the Chapel of Hate.

"If they should return to seek me," he said, "I have discovered a way. The Cave has an outlet which they will never find, and which I only learned by chance."

He paused a moment; then in answer to Master Arfoll's questioning look, he proceeded:

"You know the great Cave? Ah, no; but it is vast, like the Cathedral at St. Emlett, and no man except myself has ever searched it through. After I had killed Pipriac I returned, for all other places were dangerous; and as I entered, Pipriac stood before me as if in life, with his great wounds bleeding, and his eyes looking at me. That was only for a moment, then he was gone; but he came to me again and again till I was sick with fear. Master Arfoll, it is terrible to have shed blood, and old Pipriac was a good fellow, after all—besides, he was my father's friend, and that is worse. Mother of God, what a death! I think of it always, and it gives me no peace!"

As he spoke, his former manner returned, and he shivered through and through as if with violent cold; but the touch of Master Arfoll's hand again calmed him, and he proceeded:

"Well, at last, one night, when there was black storm, I could bear it no longer, and I struck a light with flint and steel, and I lit my torch, and to pass away the hours I

began measuring round and round the walls with my feet, counting the paces. It was then I discovered, in the far darkness of the great Cave, a hole through which a man might crawl, a hole like a black stain ; one might search for days and not find it out. I crawled through on hands and knees, and a little way in I found another cave, nearly as large as the first. Then I thought, 'Let them come when they like, I shall be safe ; I can crawl in here.' That was not all, for I soon found that the cliffs were hollowed out like a great honeycomb, and whichever way I searched there were stone passages winding into the heart of the earth."

"It is the same along there at La Vilaine," said Master Arfoll ; "the entrances are known, but no men have searched the caverns through, for they believe them haunted. Some say the Romans made them long ago. But who can tell ?"

Rohan did not reply, but seemed to have fallen again into a sort of waking trance. At last he looked up, and pointing at the window of the chapel, said quietly :

"See, the rain is over, and the moon is up."

The rain had indeed ceased, and through the cloudy rack above a stormy moon was rising and pouring her vitreous rays on a raging surf of cloud. The wind, so far from abating, roared more wildly than ever, and the face of heaven was as a human face convulsed with torturing passion and illumed by its own mad light.

Master Arfoll gazed upwards for some moments in silence; then he said quietly:

"And now, what will you do? Ah, that I could help you! but I am so feeble and so poor. Have you no other friend?"

"Yes, one—Jàn Goron. But for him I should have died."

"God reward him!"

"Three times since Pipriac died Jàn has hidden food under the dolmen in the Field of the Festival; and my mother has made torches of tallow and pitch, that I might not go mad in the dark; and besides these, I have a lantern and oil. Jàn hides them and I find them, under the dolmen."

Master Arfoll again took the outcast's hands between his own, and pressed them affectionately.

"God has given you great courage, and where another man's heart would have broken, you have lived. Have courage still, my poor Rohan — there is hope yet. Do you know, there has been a great battle, and the Emperor has lost."

That one word "Emperor" seemed enough to conjure up all the madness in Rohan's brain. He rose to his feet, reaching out his arms to the altar of the chapel, while Master Arfoll continued—

"There are wild sayings afloat. Some say the Emperor is a prisoner in Germany, others that he has tried to kill himself; but all say, and it is certain, that he has been beaten as he was never beaten before, and that he is in full retreat. The world has arisen against him at last."

An hour later the two men stood together at the Chapel door.

"I shall visit your uncle's house," said the

itinerant, "and I shall see your Cousin Marcelle. Shall I give her any message?"

Rohan trembled, but answered quietly :

"Tell her to comfort my mother—she has no one else left in the world."

Then the men embraced, and Master Arfoll walked away into the night. For a space Rohan stood in the chapel entrance, watching the figure until it disappeared; then, throwing up his arms with a bitter cry, he too fled from the place, like a man flying from some evil thing.





## CHAPTER IV.

INTRODUCES A SCARECROW OF GLORY.

**E**ARLY the next day, as the Derval household were assembled at their morning meal, Master Arfoll entered the quaint old kitchen, and with the quiet salutation of the country—"God save all here!"—took his seat uninvited by the fire. The Corporal nodded his head coldly, Alain and Jannick smiled, and the women murmured the customary "welcome"; but an awkward silence followed, and it was clear that the entrance of Master Arfoll caused a certain constraint. Indeed, the Corporal had just been engaged, spectacles on nose, in deciphering aloud a bulletin from the seat

of war—one of those fanciful documents on which Bonaparte was accustomed to expend all the splendour of a mendacious imagination. But even Bonaparte, on this occasion, was unable to concoct a narrative totally misleading as to the true state of the situation. Amid all his pomp of sounding words, and all his flourish of misleading falsehoods, there peeped out the skeleton fact that the imperial army had been terribly and almost conclusively beaten, and that it had been compelled to give up all its dreams of conquest, and to retreat (“confusedly,” as old stage directions have it) back to the frontier.

Now, the Corporal was no fool, and in reality his heart was very sore for the sake of his favourite; but he was not the man to admit the fact to unsympathetic outsiders. So when Master Arfoll entered he became silent, and, stumping over to the fireside, began to fill his pipe.

“You have news, I see,” said the itinerant, after a long pause. “Is it true, then, Corporal Derval?”



The Corporal scowled down from his height of six feet, demanding—

“Is what true, Master Arfoll?”

“About the great battle, and the retreat. Is not the Emperor still marching on France, as they say?”

The Corporal gave a fierce snort, and crammed the tobacco down savagely in the bowl of his pipe.

“As they say?” he repeated, contemptuously. “As the geese say, Master Arfoll! Ah! if you were an old soldier, and if you knew the Emperor as I know him, you would not talk about retreating. Soul of a crow, does a spider ‘retreat’ into his hole when he is trying to coax the flies? Does a hawk ‘retreat’ into the sky when he is looking out for sparrows? I will tell you this, Master Arfoll: when the Little Corporal plays at ‘retreating,’ his enemies may keep their eyes open like the owls; for just as they are laughing and running after him, as they think, up he will pop in their midst and at their backs, ready to eat them up!”

The itinerant saw how the land lay, and

offered no contradiction ; only he said after a little, looking at the fire :

“ Before Leipsic it was terrible. Is it not true that fifty thousand Frenchmen fell ? ”

The Corporal had now lighted his pipe, and was puffing furiously. Master Arfoll's quiet questions irritated him, and he glared round at his nephews, and down at the visitor, with a face as red as the bowl of his own pipe.

“ I do not know,” he replied, “ and I do not care. You are a scholar, Master Arfoll, and you know a good deal of books, but I will tell you frankly, you do not understand war. A great general does not count these things ; fifty men killed or fifty thousand, it is all the same ; he may lose twice as many men as the enemy, and yet he may have won the victory for all that. Fifty thousand men, bah ! If it were twice fifty thousand it would be all the same. Go to ! the Emperor knows what he is about.”

“ But your own nephews,” said Master Arfoll, “ they, at least, are safe ? ”

The Corporal cast an uneasy glance at

the widow, who had lifted her white face eagerly at Master Arfoll's words, then he smiled grimly.

“Good lads, good lads!—yes; when we last heard from them they were safe and well. Gildas wrote for both; as you know, he writes a brave hand, and he was in high spirits, I can tell you. He had a little scratch, and was nursed at the hospital for a month, but he was soon all right again, and merry as a cricket. Ah! it is a brave life, he says: plenty to eat and drink, and money to spend; that is the way, too, one sees the world.”

“Were your nephews in the great battle, Corporal Derval?”

With another uneasy glance at the widow, the Corporal snorted a reply:

“I do not know; powers of heaven, I cannot tell, for we have not heard since; but this I know, Master Arfoll, wherever the Emperor pointed with his finger, and said to them ‘Go,’ Hoël and Gildas were *there*.”

“Then you are not sure that they survive?” said Master Arfoll, sinking his voice.

The white face of the widow was uplifted again, and the Corporal's voice trembled as he replied :

“ They are in God's hands, and God will preserve them. They are doing their duty like brave men in a glorious service, and He will not desert them ; and of this I am sure,— that we shall hear from them soon.”

[But ah, my Corporal, what of the fifty thousand who fell on Leipsic field? Were *they* all in God's hands too, and did He desert *them*? Each hearth for its own; and from fifty thousand went up a prayer, and from fifty thousand the same fond cry, “ We shall hear from them soon ! ”]

As the Corporal ceased to speak, the company became conscious of the figure of a man, which had entered quietly at the open door, and now stood regarding them. A pitiful object, indeed, and grim as pitiful ! His face was dirty and unshaven, and round his head was twisted a coloured handkerchief instead of hat or cap. A ragged great coat reached to his knees ; beneath it dangled ragged ends of trousers ; the feet were bare, and one was

wrapped up in a bloody handkerchief. He leant upon a stick, surveying the circle, and on his face there was an expression of rakish wretchedness, such as might be remarked in a very old jackdaw in the last stage of moulting and uncleanliness.

“God save all here!” he said in a shrill voice.

“Welcome, good man!” said the Corporal, motioning the mendicant—for such he seemed—to a seat by the fire.

The new comer did not stir, but, leaning on his staff, wagged his head from side to side with a diabolical grin at Marcelle, and then winked frightfully at Alain and Jannick.

The widow sprang up with a scream.

“Mother of God, it is Gildas!”

All started in amazement: the boys from their seats at the table, Marcelle from her spinning-wheel, while the Corporal dropped his pipe and gazed. In another moment Mother Derval had embraced the apparition, and was crying over him, and kissing his hands.

It was, indeed, Gildas Derval—but so worn,

and torn, and stained with travel, so begrimed with dust of the road, and so burnt and blistered with the sun, that only his great height made him recognizable. His face was covered with a sprouting beard, and over his right eye he had a hideous scar. A more disreputable scarecrow never stood in a green field, or darkened a respectable door.

Before another word could be said, the mother screamed again.

“Mother of God, he has lost an arm!”

It was but too true. From the soldier's left side dangled an empty ragged sleeve. There was another wail from the mother, but Gildas only laughed and nodded knowingly at his uncle. Then Marcelle came up and embraced him; then Jannick and Alain; and, finally, the Corporal, with flaming face and kindling eye, slapped Gildas on the back, wrung him by the hand, and kissed him on both cheeks.

The poor mother, fluttering like some poor bird about her young, was the first to think of the fledgling who was far away. When Gildas was ensconced in the great chair, with

Mother Derval kneeling at his feet, and resting her arms on his knees, while Marcelle was hanging over him and kissing him again, came the question,—

“And Hoël? where have you left Hoël?”

Gildas stretched out his great hand and patted his mother on the head. In every gesture of the man there was a swaggering patronage quite different to his former stolid manner, and he was obviously on the best terms with himself and with the world.

“Hoël is all right, mother, and sends his love. Ah, he has never had a scratch, while I, look you, have had my old luck.” Turning to Master Arfoll, who still sat in the ingle, he continued, “You see I am invalided, worse luck, just as the fun is beginning. A bullet wound, uncle, and they thought at first I should not be maimed; but when I was lying in the hospital, well content, in comes the surgeon-major with his saw—grrr!” (Here he ground his teeth to imitate the instrument at work)—and before I could squeal, off it came, and left me as you see!”

As he spoke, his mother trembled, half

fainting, and the boys looked at him in admiration. The Corporal nodded his head approvingly, as much as to say, "Good! this is a small matter; but the boy has come through it well."

"Where did you get your wound?" asked Master Arfoll.

"Before Dresden," replied the soldier, "on the second day; then I was carried in the ambulance to Leipsic; and when I was strong, I received my discharge. I had a government pass as far as Nantes, and plenty of good company; after that, I and a comrade tramped to St. Gurlott, where we parted, and I came home. Well, here I am at home, and that's the way of the world—ups and downs, ups and downs!"

By this time the Corporal had brought out a bottle, and was filling out little glasses of corn brandy.

"Drink, *mon garz!*" he said.

Gildas tipped off his glass, and then held it out to be refilled, while the mother, with many sighs and ejaculations to herself, was furtively taking stock of his dilapidated attire.



When her eyes fell upon his bandaged foot, she wept, quietly drying her eyes with her apron.

“It is not bad stuff,” said the hero. “To you all!”

He tossed off the fiery fluid without winking; then looking up at Marcelle, who was still bending over him, he said roguishly, with the air of a veteran—

“I will tell you this, little one. The German girls are like their own hogsheads, and I have not seen as pretty a face as yours since I left France. They are greedy, too, these fat frauleins, and will rob a soldier of his skin.”

Marcelle stooped down and whispered a question in his ear; whereat he smiled and nodded, and quietly opening the breast of his shirt, showed her, still hanging by a ribbon round his neck, one of the medals she had dipped before his departure in the Pool of the Blood of Christ. Marcelle kissed him again, and raised her eyes to heaven, confident now that her charm had wrought his preservation.

Unwilling to intrude longer on the family circle, Master Arfoll rose, and again felicitating Gildas on his safe return, took his departure. Left to themselves, the excited family eagerly surrounded the hero, and plied him with question after question, all of which he answered rather by imagination than by strict matter of fact. Scarecrow as he was, he was surrounded in their eyes by a halo of military glory, and by his side even the Corporal, with his stale associations, seemed insignificant. Indeed, he patronized his uncle like the rest, in a style worthy of an old veteran ; and, brimful of his new and raw experience, quietly pooh-poohed the other's old-fashioned opinions.

“ And you have seen the Emperor, *mon garz ?* ” said the Corporal. “ You have seen him with your own eyes ? ”

Gildas nodded his “ I believe you,” and then said, with his head cocked on one side, in his uncle's own fashion—

“ I saw him last at Dresden. It was raining cats and dogs, and the little man was like a drowned rat ; his grey coat soaked, and

his hat drawn over his eyes, and running like a spout. *Diab!e!* how he galloped about—you would have said it was an old woman on horseback, riding straddle-legged to market. He may be a great general, I admit," added the irreverent novice, "but he does not know how to ride."

"Not know how to ride! the Emperor!" ejaculated the Corporal, aghast. In *his* days such criticism would have been treated as blasphemy; but now, when misfortunes were beginning, the rawest recruit passed judgment on his leader.

"He sits hunched up in a lump—like this," said Gildas, suiting the action to the word, "and no rascally recruit from the Vosges is more shabby. You would not say he was the Emperor at all, but a beggar who had stolen a horse to ride on. Ah, if you want something *like* a general to look at, you should see Marshal Ney."

"Marshal Ney!" echoed the Corporal with a contemptuous snort.

"He dresses himself for battle as if he were going to a ball, and his hair is all oiled

and perfumed, and he has rings on his fingers, and his horse is all silver and gold and crimson like himself. And then, if you please, he can ride like an angel! His horse obeys him like a pretty partner, and he whirls and curvets and dances till your eyes are dazzled."

"Bah!" cried the Corporal. "The great doll!"

It is just possible that the veteran and his nephew might have come to words on the subject of their favourites; only just then the mother brought warm water to bathe the soldier's sore feet, and, with a look at her brother-in-law to deprecate further argument, knelt down and unrolled the bandage from the foot that was cut and lame. With many loving murmurs she then bathed the feet, and anointed them with sweet oil, while Marcelle prepared clean linen for Gildas to wear. "To-morrow," thought the widow, "little Plouët shall come in to trim his hair and shave his beard, and then he will look my own handsome boy again." Plouët was an individual who to his other avocations added

the duties of village barber, and wielded the razor, to use the popular expression, "like an angel."

Happy is he, however lowly, to whom loving hands minister, and who has such a home to receive and shelter him in his hour of need! Gildas might complain of his bad luck, but in his heart he knew that he was a fortunate fellow. From a stranger's point of view, just then, he was certainly as disreputable a looking object as could be found in a day's march. Long before the widow had dried his aching feet, he had collapsed in his chair, and was snoring lustily. With his chin sunk deep into his great coat, his matted hair escaping from the coloured handkerchief which covered his head, his empty sleeve dangling, and his two ragged legs outstretching, he looked more and more a scarecrow, more and more capable of frightening off the small birds of his village from the paths of glory. But to the trembling mother he was beautiful, and her heart yearned out to him with unutterable pity and affection. He had come back to her in

life, though sadly marred, and, like Bottom, "marvellously transformed"; but he had paid his contribution to glory, and come what might, he could never go to war again.





## CHAPTER V.

### GLIMPSES OF A DEAD WORLD.

**R**OHAN Gwenfern needed to have had little apprehension that fresh search would be made for him in the Cave of St. Gildas. After once searching the Cave, and finding it empty, the *gendarmes* were glad of any pretext to keep away : not that they were actually afraid, or that they would have hesitated to raise the siege anew, but the death of Pipriac, occurring as it did, had filled them with a superstitious dread.

For some days after Pipriac's death vigorous exertions were made to discover the whereabouts of his murderer ; but although the *gen-*

*darmes* were more than once upon his track, and although he had come into personal collision with Mikel Grallon, all the pursuit was unavailing. The authorities at St. Gurlott stormed; a fresh reward was offered in well-posted placards; but Rohan still remained at large. And before many days had elapsed, his very existence seemed forgotten in the excitement of the news from the seat of war.

In vain was it for Corporal Derval and others of his way of thinking to hold forth in the street and by the fireside, and to prove that the sun of Bonaparte was not setting but actually rising. In vain was it for the "scarecrow of glory," trimmed by the barber, and made sweet by clean linen, to hold forth in the *cabaret* that all would be well so long as the Emperor had "Marshal Ney" at his right hand. In vain did the lying bulletins come in from Paris to St. Gurlott, and from St. Gurlott to its tributary villages. A very general impression was abroad that things were in a bad way. The loyalist party in Kromlaix began to look at each other and to smile.



From the little upper chamber in the Corporal's dwelling still went up a virgin's prayers for the great Emperor, mingled with more passionate prayers for Rohan Gwenfern. Marcelle could not, or would not, understand that the Emperor was the cause of her lover's misfortunes; no, he was too great, too good, and—ah! if one could only reach his ear! He loved his people well; he had given her uncle the Cross, and all men knew he had a tender heart. How could he know what wicked men did in his name? If she could only go to him, and fall at his feet, and ask for her lover's life! Alas, how rash and foolish Rohan had been! It was wicked for him to refuse to help the Emperor; but then he had not been himself, he had been mad. And here was the end!—here was Gildas come back covered with glory and alive and well, while Rohan was still a hunted man, with Pipriac's blood upon his head. If Rohan had only been brave like her brother, God would have brought him back.

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While Marcelle was pleading and praying, Rohan Gwenfern was moving like a sleepless spirit through the darkness of the earth. Was it broad awake, or in a wondrous dream, that he crept through sunless caverns, torch in hand, exploring night and day? It did not seem real, and he himself did not feel real. Phantoms troubled him, voices cried in his ears, cold hands touched him, and again and again the ghost of Pipriac arose before him with rebuking eyes.

It was all real, nevertheless. The discovery of the mysterious inlet from the Cave of St. Gildas led to a series of discoveries no less remarkable. He had not exaggerated when he had asserted to Master Arfoll that the cliffs were veritably "honeycombed."

In sheer despair, to keep his thoughts from driving him completely mad, he prosecuted his lonely search. From the great inner cave which he had by accident discovered, ran numerous narrow passages, some far too small to admit a human body, others high and vaulted. Most of these passages, after winding for greater or less dis-

tances into the solid cliff, terminated in *culs de sac*. After minute examination he discovered one which did not so terminate, but which, after extending for a long distance parallel with the face of the cliff, and gradually ascending upward, ended in a small cave well lighted by a narrow chink in the cliff. From this chink, which was like a window in the very centre of the most inaccessible and perpendicular crag on the coast, he could see the ocean for miles around him, the fishing vessels coming from and going to the beach of the village, and, higher still, a glimpse of the lower extremity of the village itself, quite a mile away. Beneath him there was no beach, only the sea washing at all sides on the base of the cliff, and creeping here and there into the gloomy water-caverns which the superstitious fishermen never ventured to explore.

With a strange sense of freedom and exultation he discovered this new hiding-place, the aperture of which, to any one sailing on the sea below, would have seemed like a mere dark stain on the crag's face. Here he soon made his head-quarters, free to enjoy

the light of sun and moon. Inaccessible as an eagle in its eyrie, he could here draw the breath of life in peace.

A day or so later he ascertained that this cave communicated by a precipitous passage with the sea below. Not without considerable danger he descended through the darkness, and, after feeling his way cautiously for hours, he found himself standing on a narrow shelf of slippery rock in the very heart of a great water-cave.

Vast crimson columns, hung with many-coloured weeds and mosses, supported a vaulted roof which distilled a perpetual glistening dew and shook it down on the deep waters beneath, which were clear as crystal and green as malachite. A faint phosphorescent light, which seemed to issue from the water itself, but stole in imperceptibly from the distant mouth of the cave, showed purple flowers and flags stirring gently far below, and strange living creatures that moved upon a bottom of shining sand.

As Rohan stood looking downward, a large female seal, splashing down from a

shelf of rock, began swimming round and round the cavern without any effort to escape; and Rohan, listening, could hear the bleat of its tiny lamb coming from the darkness. After a minute it disappeared, and the faint bleat ceased.

A little reflection showed Rohan where he stood. Quite a hundred yards away was the mouth of the cavern—a space some twelve feet broad but only a few high, and so hung with moss and fungi as to be almost concealed. Around this mouth the sea was many fathoms deep, and a boiling current eddied for ever at all states of the tide. Rohan remembered well how often he had rowed past, and how his fellow-fishermen had told awful legends of foolhardy mortals who, in times remote, had tried to enter “Hell’s Mouth,” as they called it, and how no boat that sailed through was ever known to return. Certain it was that at times there issued thence terrific volumes of raging water, accompanied by sounds as of internal earthquake, which served to make the place terrible even without the aid of superstition.

Later on the causes of these phenomena will be sufficiently apparent.

There is something awful to a sensitive mind in coming by accident on any strange secret of Nature, in penetrating unaware to some solemn arcanum of the Mother-goddess where never human foot before has trod, and where the twilight of primæval mystery lingers for ever. Even in those solemn caves of the sea which are safely accessible to man there is something still and terrible beyond measure. In no churches do we pause half so reverently, in no shrines are we so strangely constrained to pray. To the present writer these natural temples are familiar, and he has spent within them his most religious hours.

To Rohan Gwenfern, who had crouched so long in darkness, and who had suffered so dark a persecution from all the forces of the world without, it suddenly seemed as if Nature, in a mystery of new love and pity, had taken him to her very heart; had touched his lids with a new balm, his soul with a new peace, and, folding him softly in

her arms, had revealed to him a faëry vision of her own soul's calm—a divine glimpse of that

“Central peace subsiding at the heart  
Of endless agitation,”

which so few men that live are permitted to feel and enjoy. He could not have expressed his happiness in æsthetic phrases, but he had it none the less; and by those new discoveries his soul was greatly strengthened. Up there in the aërial cave he could bask in the sunlight without fear; and down here, in a silent water-world, he could spend many wondering hours.

A stranger discovery was yet to come. He had found the key to a mystery, and it opened many doors.

Along the sides of the water-cavern ran a narrow ledge, communicating with that on which he had first descended; although it was slippery as glass, it afforded a footing for Rohan's naked feet. Creeping along this ledge for some thirty yards, and clinging to the crimson columns for partial support, he

reached the extreme inner end of the cave and leaped down upon a narrow space of steep shingle, against which the still, green water washed. He had no sooner done so than he discovered, to his astonishment, a vaulted opening, gleaming with stalactite and crimson moss, leading apparently into the heart of the cliffs. It was very dark. After groping his way stealthily forward till all light faded, he retraced his steps.

His curiosity was now thoroughly aroused. Returning to his aerial hiding-place, he procured a rude horn lantern with which Jàn Goron had supplied him, lit it carefully, and then again descended. Finally, lantern in hand, he again entered the dark passage, determined to explore it to its furthest limits.

It was just so broad that he could touch both walls with the tips of the fingers of his outstretched hand; so high that, standing on tiptoe, with the tips of his fingers he could touch the roof. It seemed of solid stone, and fashioned as symmetrically as if by human hands. Wherever the light fell the walls glimmered smooth and moist, without



any trace of vegetation. The air was damp and icy cold, like the air of a sepulchre, but it did not seem otherwise impure.

He had crept forward some hundred yards or more, when he came to an ascending flight of stone steps. Yes, his eyes did not deceive him: red granite steps, carefully and laboriously hewn. His heart gave a great leap, for now he knew for certain, what he had indeed suspected from the first, that the excavations were not natural, but had been wrought by human hands.

Simple as this fact may appear, it filled him with a kind of terror, and he almost turned to retrace his way. Recovering himself, however, he ascended the steps, and entered, at their top, another passage, which bore unmistakably the signs of human workmanship.

After he had proceeded another hundred yards he came to another ascent of steps, and, after ascending these, to another passage. The air now became suffocating and oppressive, and the light in the lantern grew faint almost to dying. Crawling forward, how-

ever, he emerged in a space so vast and so forbidding that he stood trembling in consternation—a mighty Vault or Catacomb, compared to which all the other caverns he had explored were insignificant. Vast walls of granite supported a roof high as the roof of a cathedral, from which depended black fungi bred of perpetual moisture and dripping an eternal dew. The interior was wrapped in pitch darkness, and full of a murmur as of the sea. The floor was solid black stone, polished to icy smoothness, but covered by a slippery sort of moss.

Rohan stood in awe, half-expecting to see appalling phantoms start from the darkness and drive him forth. Into what place of mystery had he penetrated? Into what catacomb of the dead? Into what ghostly abode of spirits? His head swam; for a moment his customary seizure came, and he heard and saw nothing. Then he crept cautiously forward into the cavern.

As he moved, the sea-like murmur grew deeper, seeming to come from the very ground beneath his feet. He drew back

listening,—and just in time; for he was standing on the very edge of a black gulf, at the foot of which a moaning water ran. He peered over, flashing the light down. A black liquid glimmer came from beneath, from water in motion, rapidly rushing past.

He then perceived that the gulf and its contents occupied the entire interior of the great vault, and that the floor on which he stood was merely a narrow shelf artificially fashioned. The vast columns rose on every side of him, glittering with silvern damp, and the curtain of fungi stirred overhead like a black pall.

Suddenly, as he flashed his light over the place, he started aghast. Not far away stood another figure, on the edge of the gulf, looking down.

Rohan was superstitious by nature, and his mind had been unsettled by his privations. He stood terror-stricken, and the lanthorn almost fell from his hands. Meantime the figure did not stir.



## CHAPTER VI.

### THE AQUEDUCT.

**N**AGER to satisfy himself, Rohan drew nearer, and at last recognized, in the shape which he had at first deemed human or ghostly, a gigantic Statue of black marble set on a pedestal on the very edge of the chasm.

Lifeless as it was, the Shape was terrible. It had stood there for centuries, and the perpetual drops distilling from the roof above had eaten into its solid mass, so that part of the face was destroyed and portions of the body had melted away. Its lower limbs were completely enwrapped in a loathsome green vegetation, crawling up, as it seemed, out

of the water beneath. In size it was colossal, and standing close beside it Rohan seemed a pigmy.

Little by little Rohan discerned that it had represented an imperial figure, clad in the Roman toga, bareheaded, but crowned with bay. Though the face was mutilated, the contour of the neck and head remained, and recalled the bull-like busts of Roman emperors and conquerors which may be seen on ancient medals, engravings of which Rohan had noticed in the French translation of Tacitus given him by Master Arfoll. In a moment the mind of Rohan was illuminated. He recalled all the popular traditions concerning the Roman towns submerged under Kromlaix. He remembered the strange pictures conjured up by Master Arfoll—of the houses of marble and temples of gold, the great baths and theatres, the statues of the gods. Then, it was all true! Not far away, perhaps, the City itself glimmered, and this was a first glimpse of its dead world.

But this water, flowing so murmurously

through the cave, whence did it come, and whither did it go? He was still speculating when he perceived close to the Statue's pedestal a broad flight of steps leading downward. They were slippery with green slime, but with extreme care one could descend.

He crawled down cautiously, feeling his way foot by foot, and stair by stair; and at last he ascertained that the steps descended into the very water itself, which rushed past his feet with a cry like a falling torrent, but black as jet. He reached out his hand, lifted some of the water to his lips, and found that it was quite fresh, with the flavour of newly-fallen rain.

Then, for the first time, he remembered the subterranean River, about which superstition was so garrulous, and above the buried bed of which Kromlaix was said to be built. All the memories of mysterious sounds heard in times of storm came back upon his brain; and he remembered how often, down in the village, he had pressed his ear against the earth and listened for the murmur of the

River far below. The dark waters on which he was now gazing were doubtless a tributary stream, if not the very river itself; and were he to launch himself upon them, he would come perchance to the doomed ruins of the City. It was all real, then; yet so strange, so like a wonderful dream!

Returning to his aërial chamber on the face of the great cliff, Rohan sat and brooded in a new wonder. He was like a man who had been down into the grave and had interviewed the dead, and had brought with him strange secrets of the sunless world. His discovery of the great Roman vault, with its dark passages communicating with the sea, came upon him with a stupefying surprise. And even as he sat he thought of that black Statue, standing like a living thing in its place, the emblem of a world that had passed away.

HE, too, whoever he was, had lived and reigned, as the Emperor was then reigning; he too, perhaps, robed in purple and filleted with bay, had "bestrode the world

like a Colossus," and urged a bloody generation on. Temples and coliseums, baths of precious marble and amphitheatres adorned with gold, had arisen at his bidding; at the lifting of his finger victories had been won and lands been lost; and ere his death mortals had hailed him as a god. That statue of him had been set there by his slaves, and other statues of him had been set elsewhere in street and mart, that men might know the glory of his name, and cry, "Hail, O Cæsar, we who are about to die salute thee!" And the Statue stood there still in its place, buried from the light of the sun, but of *his* footprints in the world there was no sign.

For two days the burthen of his discovery was so heavy upon him that Rohan did not dare to return to the mysterious Vault. He sat listening to the wind, whose fierce wings flapped with iron clang against the face of the cliff, and gazing out upon the white and troubled sea. For some time there had been heavy rain, and it was still falling, falling.

The morning of the third day broke dark and peaceful; rain still fell, but there was no



wind, and the sea was calm as glass. Gazing from the window of his cave, Rohan saw the still waters, stained with purple shadows, and broken here and there by outlying reefs, stretching smooth and still as far as Krom-laix; and the red fishing boats crawling this way and that among the reefs, and here and there a great raft drifting between the reefs and the shore. For it was close upon the season for gathering the sea-wrack, or *goëmon*, a harvest which takes place twice a year, and the produce of which is used for fuel as well as for manuring the land. Rafts are made of old planks and barrels, rudely lashed together, piled high with the wrack gathered from the weedy reefs, and suffered to drift to shore before the wind or with the tide.

There was companionship, at least, in watching others at the work he knew so well. How often had not Rohan lashed his raft together, and piloted himself along the rocky coast—not without many a swim in the deep sea, when his raft was too much laden and had overturned.

He sat looking on for hours. As the day advanced, however, great banks of cloud drifted up from the south, and a black vapour crawling in from the sea covered the crags, and entirely obscured the prospect in every direction. There was a dreary and oppressive silence, broken only by the heavy falling of a leaden rain. The air seemed full of a nameless trouble, like that which precedes a thunderstorm and shakes the forest leaves without a breath.

As the afternoon advanced, the rain fell more heavily, but the mists did not rise. Weary and dreary, Rohan prepared his lantern and determined again to visit the mysterious Vault. By this time, he had almost ceased to realize his own discovery; it seemed more and more a dream, a vision, such as those to which his troubles had made him accustomed; and he was quite prepared to find himself in the position of the man who, having once found and forsaken a fairy treasure, sought in vain to discover it again.

He descended rapidly to the basaltic water-cave communicating with the sea, and

found it calm, beautiful, and unchanged ; then, passing along the rocky ledge to its innermost extremity, he leapt down upon the shingle, and stood again before the vaulted opening, leading into the heart of the cliffs.

As he entered, there came from within a strange sound which he had not previously remarked—a dull, heavy murmur, as of water struggling and rushing between trembling barriers. He hesitated, and listened. He seemed to hear strange voices moaning and crying, and another sound like the flapping of the great wind against the crag.

After a few minutes' pause he hurried onward, through the clammy passages, up the flights of marble steps, nearer and nearer to the Roman vault. As he advanced the murmur grew to a roar, and the roar to thunder, until it seemed the solid earth was quaking all around him ; and when, trembling and shuddering, he entered the great Vault itself, he seemed surrounded by all the thunders and ululations of an Inferno.

The cause of the commotion now became unmistakable. The river was tumbling and

shrieking in the gulf, and tearing at the walls of stone between which it ran.

He crept forward along the slippery floor, which seemed quaking beneath his feet, and approached the Statue of stone. It still stood there, colossal and awful, but it was trembling in its place like a mortal man quivering with awe; indeed, the whole Vault was quaking as with the throes of sudden earthquake.

He gazed over the flight of black stairs leading to the River, and flashed his light down. In a moment he perceived that the water had risen, so that only a few steps remained uncovered; and as it foamed and fretted, and whirled and eddied past, boiling and shrieking in its bed, flakes of fierce foam were beaten up into his face.

Rushing he knew not whence, roaring he knew not whither, the water filled the gulf, and shook its solid barriers with the force that only water possesses. Another look convinced him that it was rapidly and tumultuously rising.

Already it was within a few feet of the

base of the Statue, and still it was swelling upward with inconceivable rapidity. It was as if the tide itself had rushed into the gulf, filling and overflowing it.

The mind of Rohan was well skilled in danger, and perceived instantaneously the full peril of the situation. To remain where he stood would be to encounter instantaneous death. With the thunder of the waters in his ears, the walls of solid stone quaking around him, and the ground trembling beneath his feet, he turned and fled.

Not a moment too soon. Down the vaulted passages he passed, until he emerged upon the great water-cave far beneath.

As he touched the narrow space of shingle he heard behind him a horrible concussion, a sound as if the very crags were crumbling down together; then a roar as of many waters escaping, as of a great river rushing after him, and coming ever nearer and nearer.

Swift as thought he climbed up on the rocky ledge above the water, and made his way to the aperture by which he had de-

scended from his aërial cave. Pausing there, and clinging to the rocks, he beheld vast volumes of smoke and water belching from the passage by which he had just escaped; roaring and rushing down tumultuously to mingle with the sea, till all the still green waters of the cave, stained brown and black, were bubbling like a great cauldron at his feet.





## CHAPTER VII.

“THE NIGHT OF THE DEAD.”

**T** was All Saints' Eve, 1813. While Rohan Gwenfern was penetrating, torch in hand, into the ghostly Roman Vault or Aqueduct, deep-buried in the heart of the cliffs, the chapel bells of Kromlaix were ringing, and crowds were flocking through the darkness to hear the priest say mass, a task in which he and his “vicaire” would be engaged unceasingly till the coming of dawn. The night was dark and still, but the rain was falling heavily, and a black curtain covered the sea. Everywhere in the narrow streets of Kromlaix were glistening pools formed by the newly fallen

rain, and into these the heavy drops plashed incessantly, making a dreary murmur. But fainter and deeper than the sound of the rain came another sound, like a cry from the earth beneath : a strange far-off murmur, like the distant moaning of the sea.

The doors stood open wide, and in every house the supper-table stood spread, with a clean linen cloth, lights, and the evening meal ; and around the table stood vacant chairs ; and on the hearth there burnt a fire, carefully arranged to last till dawn. For it was the Night of the Dead ; and after the death-bell had been tolled, the dead-mass said, the supper eaten, and the household retired to rest, the Souls of the Dead would enter in and partake of the solemn feast in the dwellings where they had died, or where their kin abode. Then the household would listen, and hear strange wailings in the rooms and at the doors ; and then they would rise from their beds, fall upon their knees, and pray that, but for this one waking night of the year, those they loved might sleep in peace.



Not only from the little churchyard on the hill-side, where the light was gleaming through the open chapel door, would the Souls of the Dead come ; but over the wild wastes inland, and down the lonely roads from the far-off towns, and most of all, in from the washing waters of the sea. Strange phosphorescent lights were moving already to and fro upon the deep. High in the air strange eerie voices were crying. From land and sea, from all the places where they slept, the Dead were coming back to the homes they loved in life.

At one o'clock in the morning the moon would be full, and it would be *grande mer*, or high tide. There was no moonlight, and in deep windless darkness fell the rain ; but lights flashed in all the windows, and a lurid gleam came from the little chapel, where Father Rolland and his "vicaire" were performing the mass. The living were praying, and ghosts were hovering in the black air, when Marcelle Derval, leaving her mother behind her in the chapel, came down through the darkness with some companions of her

own age and sex, and parted with them at her uncle's door.

Entering in, she found the kitchen bright and cleanly swept, lights upon the table, a great fire on the hearth, and the hero of Dresden seated alone in the chimney corner.

"Are you there, Marcelle?" he cried with a nod, withdrawing from his mouth a great wooden pipe which he had brought back with him from Germany. "The old one was anxious about you, and he has gone up the street to look after you. Where is mother, —and the boys?"

"She is still at chapel, and will not return till it strikes twelve."

"And you?"

"I am tired, and I shall go to bed."

"Supper is ready," said Gildas; "sit down and eat."

Marcelle shook her head. She looked very pale, and her whole manner betokened bodily or mental fatigue.

"Good night," she said, kissing Gildas; then she lit her lamp, and went wearily up

the stairs. All that day her heart had been full of Rohan, and now, when night came, she was thinking of him with strange pain. It was the Night of the Dead, but she was too young to have much to mourn for, and, beyond her two brothers, who had died in battle, had known no losses. Nevertheless, the burthen of the time lay heavily upon her, and she trembled before the shadow of something that did not live. Rohan Gwenfern was *her* dead, lost to her and the world, buried out yonder in the black night, as surely as if he no longer breathed at all. While others had been praying for their lost, whom the good God had stricken, she had been praying for hers, whom God had no less surely taken away. With the dead there was peace; for the dead-living there was only pain. So her sorrow was the worst to bear.

With this great agony in her heart she had yearned to be alone in her chamber—to think, to pray; and so she had come home. The others would soon follow, and, after midnight struck, the room below would be

left in silence, that the poor ghosts might come in and take their place at the board. Ah God! if *he* too might come, eating for one night at least the blessed bread of peace!

Left alone again in the great kitchen, Gildas Derval smoked away in his corner, ever and anon giving vent to an expression of impatience. The rain still fell without with weary and ceaseless sound, and there was a murmuring from the black streams pouring down the narrow street. Once or twice Gildas arose, and gazed out into the pitch-black night—a Night of Death indeed!

As the minutes crept on, and the hands of the Dutch clock in the corner pointed to half-past eleven, Gildas grew more uneasy. The witching hour was close at hand, and the silence was growing positively sepulchral. At every sound he started, listening intently. Hero as he was, he felt positively afraid, and bitterly regretted that he had suffered Marcelle to go to bed.

“What the devil can detain my uncle?” he muttered again and again.

At last the door opened and the Corporal

staggered in, wrapped in his old military coat, and dripping from head to foot; his cocked hat, which he wore *à l'Empereur*, formed a miniature waterspout upon his head.

"Soul of a crow!" he cried, "was there ever such a night? Are they not returned?"

"Only Marcelle," growled Gildas; "the rest are still at the chapel, though it is time all good Christians were abed."

The Corporal stumped across the room, and remained with his back to the fire, his wet clothes steaming as he stood.

"I went up the street to look for them, but seeing they did not come, I went to the shore. The tide is up to the foot of the street, and it has still some time to flow. They are frightened down there, and will not sleep to-night; but the sea is calm as glass."

As the Corporal ceased to speak Gildas sprang to his feet, and simultaneously the house shook to its very foundations as if smitten by a sudden squall of wind.

"What's that?" cried Gildas, now quite pale, crossing himself in his terror.

"It must be the wind rising," said the

Corporal ; but when he walked to the door, and threw it open to listen, there was not a breath.

"It is strange," he said in a low voice, coming back to the fire. "I have heard it twice before to-night, and one would say the earth was quaking underfoot."

"Uncle!" murmured Gildas.

"Well, *mon garz*?"

"If it is the Souls of the Dead!"

The old Corporal made a gesture of reverence, and, turning his face round, looked at the fire. Several minutes passed in uneasy silence. Then suddenly, without warning of any kind, the house shook again! This time it did not seem as if stricken by wind; but there came to both Gildas and the Corporal that strange unconscious sickening dread which is the invariable accompaniment of earthquake. The sound, like the sensation, was only momentary, but as it ceased, the men looked aghast at one another.

"It is dreadful," said the Corporal. "Soul of a crow! why does the woman linger?"

With a suddenness which startled Gildas

and made him growl in nervous irritation, the little trap-door of the Dutch clock sprang open, and the wooden cuckoo sprang out, uttering his name twelve times, and proclaiming the hour! . . . Midnight!

The Corporal, full of a nameless uneasiness, could no longer restrain himself.

“It is unaccountable,” he exclaimed. “I will go again and see.”

Before Gildas could interpose he had wrapped his coat once more about him and sallied forth into the night. Through the heavy murmuring of the rain and the rushing of the waterspouts and streams Gildas could hear the “clop clop” of the wooden leg dying up the street; then all was silence.

Of all situations this was the one Gildas was least fitted to face with advantage. He was not deficient in brute courage, and in good company he might have faced even a visitor from another world; but his little “campaign” had disturbed his nervous system, and that night of all nights in the year he did not care to be left alone. And, indeed, a far more enlightened being would,

under the circumstances, have shared his trepidation. The air was full of a sick uncomfortable silence, broken only by the "plopping" and "pinging" of the heavy metallic rain, and ever and anon, when the house trembled with those mysterious blasts, the effect was simply paralytic.

Gildas stood at the door, looking out into the rain. The darkness was complete, but the light from the chamber glistened on a perfect stream of black rain running down the street. As he stood there listening, mysterious hands seemed outstretched to touch him, cold breaths blew upon his cheek, and there was a sound all round him as of the wailing dead. Lights burned in the windows down the street, and many doors stood open like his own, but there was no sign of any human being.

Re-entering the kitchen, he approached the wooden stairs, and called gruffly—

"Marcelle! Marcelle!"

There was no answer.

"Marcelle! are you asleep?"

The door of the room above opened, and Marcelle's voice replied—



“ Is it my uncle ? ”

“ No, it is I—Gildas. Are you abed ? ”

“ I am undressed, and was half asleep. What is it ? ”

Gildas did not care to confess that he was afraid, and wanted company; so he growled—

“ Oh, it is nothing ! Mother has not come home yet, that is all ; but my uncle has gone to look after her. It is raining cats and dogs ! ”

“ She told me she would not return till midnight, and she has the boys. Good-night again, Gildas ! ”

“ Good-night ! ” muttered the hero of Dresden ; then just as the door above was closing he called, “ Marcelle ! ”

“ Yes. ”

“ You—you need not close your door—I may want to speak to you again. ”

“ Very well. ”

There was silence again, and Gildas returned to the fireside. As he did so the cottage again trembled as before. He drew back to the foot of the staircase.

"Marcelle!" he cried.

"Yes," answered the voice, this time obviously from between the sheets.

"Did you hear that?"

"The noise? Ah, yes; it is only the wind."

"It is only the Devil," muttered Gildas to himself, and, inwardly cursing Marcelle's coolness, he stepped again to the street door and looked out. A black wall of rain and darkness still stared him in the face. He stood for some minutes in agitation, with the cold drops splashing into his face. There was not a breath of wind, and by listening closely he could distinctly hear the murmur of the sea.

Suddenly his ears were startled by a sound which made his heart leap into his mouth and his blood run cold. From inland, from the direction of the chapel, there came a murmur, a roar, as if the sea lay *that* way, and was rising in storm. Before he could gather his wits together there rose far away a sound like a human shriek, and all at once, through the dreary moaning of the rain,

came the rapid tolling of a bell. Simultaneously he saw dark figures rushing rapidly up the street from the direction of the sea shore. Though he called to them they did not reply.

Yes, there could be no mistake. A bell was tolling faintly in the distance ; doubtless the chapel bell itself. Something unusual was happening—what, it was impossible to guess.

Two or three more figures passed rapidly, and he again demanded what was the matter. This time a voice answered, but only with a frightened cry—"This way, for your life !"

Anything was better than to stand there in suspense ; so without a moment's reflection Gildas ran after the others up the street.

There had been rain for weeks, and the valleys inland were already half flooded ; but to-night it poured still as if all the vials of the aqueous heavens had been opened. Well might the ground tremble and the hidden River roar ! At last, as if at a preconcerted

signal, the elements awoke in concert, and sounded the signal of storm. The sea rose high on the shore, the wind began to blow, the River rose blackly in its bed, and, most terrible of all, the pent-up floods burst their barriers among the hills.

With the natural position of Kromlaix our readers are already familiar. Situated in the gap of the great sea-wall, and lying at the mouth of a narrow valley, it was equally at the mercy of inundations from inland and of inundations from the ocean. Rocked, as it were, upon the waves of the sea which crawled in beneath it to meet the subterranean river, it had nevertheless endured from generation to generation.

Only once in the memory of the oldest inhabitant had destruction come. That was many years ago, so far back in time that it seemed an old man's tale to be heard and forgotten. Yet there had been warnings enough of danger during this same autumn of 1813. Never for many a long year had there been such a rainfall; never had there been such storms to mark the period of the

autumnal equinox. Night after night the hidden river had given its warning, so that sometimes the very earth seemed shaken by its cry. The spring-tides, too, were higher than they had been for many seasons past.

And now, on this Night of the Dead, when earth, air, and sea were covered with ghastly processions trooping to their homes, when the little churches all along the coast were lighted up, and death-lights were placed in every house, the waters rose and rushed down upon their prey. Down through the narrow valleys above the village came, with the fury of a torrent, the raging Flood, filling the narrow chasm of the valley, and bearing everything before it towards the sea. It came in darkness, so that only its voice could be heard; but could the eye of man have beheld it as it came, it would have been seen covered with floating prey of all kinds—with trees uprooted from the ground, fences and palings torn away, thatched roofs of houses, and even enormous stones. Well might those shriek who heard it come! Faster than a man might gallop on the

fleetest horse, swifter than a man might sail in the swiftest ship, it rolled upon its way, fed by innumerable tributary torrents rushing down from the hills on either side, and gathering power and volume as it approached. But when it reached the dreary tarns of Ker Léon, some miles above the village, it hesitated an hour, as if prepared to sink into the earth like the River which there ends his course; then, recruited by new floods from the hill-sides, and from the overflowing tarns themselves, it rushed onward, and the fate of Kromlaix was sealed.

During that brief space of indecision up among the tarns, the farmer of Ker Léon, a brave man, had leapt upon his horse without stopping to use saddle or bridle, and galloped down to Kromlaix, shrieking warning as he went. At midnight he reached the chapel on the hill-side, and without ceremony, wet, dripping, and as white as a ghost from the dead, delivered his awful news. Fortunately the large portion of the population was still in the chapel. Shrieks and wails arose.

“Sound the alarm!” cried Father Rolland; and the chapel bell began to toll.

It was at this moment that the old Corporal, soaking and out of temper, arrived at the chapel door, and found the widow and his two nephews just ready to return home. He passed through the wailing groups of men and women, and accosted the farmer himself.

“Perhaps, after all, it will not come so far,” he cried; “the pools of Ker Léon are deep.”

The answer came, but not from the farmer; the roar of the waters themselves coming wildly down the valley!

“To the hill-sides!” cried Father Rolland. “For your lives!”

Through the pitch darkness, struggling, screaming, stumbling, fled the crowd, leaving the chapel behind them illumined but deserted. The rain still fell in torrents. Guided by a few spirits more cool and courageous than the rest, the miserable crowd rushed towards the ascents which closed the valley on either side, and which fortunately were not far distant.

The old Corporal caught the general panic, and with eager hands helped on his affrighted sister-in-law. They had not gone far when a voice cried in the darkness close by—

"Mother! uncle!"

"It is Gildas, and alone," cried Mother Derval. "Almighty God! where is Marcelle?"

The voice of Gildas replied—

"I left her in the house below. But what is the matter? Are you all mad?"

A wild shriek from the panic-stricken creatures around was the only answer. "The Flood! the Flood!" they cried, flying for their lives; and, indeed, the imminent hour had come, for the lights of the chapel behind them were already extinguished in the raging waters, and the flood was rushing down on Kromlaix with a fatal roar, answered by a fainter murmur from the rising Sea.







## CHAPTER VIII.

### DELUGE.

**A**FTER emerging into the great water cave and clinging to its walls as the furious torrents came boiling down to mingle with the sea, Rohan Gwenfern paused for some minutes, awe-stricken and amazed; for it seemed as if the very bosom of the Earth had burst and all the dark streams of its heart were pouring forth. The tumult was deafening, the concussion terrific, and it was with difficulty that Rohan kept his place on the slippery ledge above the water. When his first surprise had abated he left the cave and ascended to his aërial home on the face of the cliff.

All there was dark, for night had now fallen. Leaning forth through the cranny which served him as a window, he saw only a great wall of blackness, heard only the heavy murmur of torrents of rain. There was no wind, and the leaden drops were pattering like bullets into the sea, in straight perpendicular lines.

He sat for a time in the darkness, pondering on the discoveries that he had made. Although his brain was to a certain extent deranged by the agonies he had undergone, and although he was subject to alarming cerebral seizures during which he was scarcely accountable for what he thought or did, the general current of his ideas was still clear, and his powers of observation and reflection remained intact. He was perfectly able, therefore, to perceive the obvious explanation of what he had seen and discovered. The subterranean cave and its passage communicating with the sea formed an enormous Aqueduct, fashioned, doubtless, for the purpose of letting the overflowing waters escape in times of flood. He had read of similar

contrivances, and he knew that an aqueduct had been excavated not many leagues away, beyond La Vilaine. In fashioning the extraordinary place advantage had doubtless been taken of natural passages which had existed there from time immemorial; but how the work was effected was a question impossible to answer, unless on the supposition that the Roman colonists had possessed an engineering skill little short of miraculous.

He remembered now all the old stories he had heard concerning former submersions of his native village, as well as the popular tradition that the buried Roman city had been itself destroyed by inundations. Was it possible, then, that the river which he had discovered crawling through the heart of the cliffs was the same river which plunged into the earth among the tarns of Ker Léon, and which, after winding for miles, eventually crept under Kromlaix and poured itself into the sea? If this was the case, all the phenomena were intelligible. The Roman colonists, fearful of floods and of the rising of the river, had constructed the Aqueduct for purposes of over-

flow, so that when the hour came the angry waters, before reaching their City, might be partially diverted into the great water-cave, and thence through "Hell's Mouth" to the open ocean. How carefully the hands of man had worked! How grandly, under the inspiration of that dead Cæsar whose marble shadow still stood below, the mind of man had planned and wrought the Aqueduct! Yet all had been of no avail. At last the finger of God had been lifted, and the shining City by the sea was seen no more.

Real and simple as seemed the explanation, the fact of the discovery was nevertheless awful and stupefying. It seemed no less a dream than Rohan's other dreams. He saw the ghost of a buried world, and his heart went sick with awe.

As he sat thinking he suddenly remembered that that night was the Night of the Dead.

No sooner had the remembrance come than a nameless uneasiness took possession of him, and, approaching the loophole, he gazed forth again. And now to his irritated

vision there seemed faint lights here and there upon the black waste of waters. He listened intently. Again and again amid the heavy murmur of the rain there came a sound like far-off voices. And yonder in Kromlaix the mass was being spoken and the white boards were being spread, for the Souls which were flocking from all quarters of the earth that night.

He lit his lantern, and sat for some time in its beam ; but the dull dim light only made his situation more desolately sad. Pacing up and down the cave in agitation, and pausing again and again to listen to the sounds without, he waited on. The darkness grew more intense, the sound of the rain more oppressively sad. Repeatedly, from far beneath him, he heard a thunderous roar, which he knew came from the waters rushing into the great ocean-cave.

As the hours crept on there came upon his soul a great hunger to be near his fellow-beings, to escape from the frightful solitude which seemed driving him to despair. In the dense darkness of that night he would be

safe anywhere. As for the rain, he heeded it not. There was a fire in his heart which seemed to destroy all sense of wet or cold.

At last, yielding to his uncontrollable impulse, he groped his way slowly downward through the natural passages and caves, until he emerged at the great Trou of St. Gildas. Here he paused until his eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness, and at last he was able dimly to discern the outline of the vast natural Cathedral. It was nine o'clock, and the tide had scarcely three parts flowed, so that not a drop had yet touched the Cathedral floor, and egress through the Gate was still possible.

Descending rapidly in his customary fashion, he reached the shingle below. Familiar even in darkness with every footstep of the way, he passed out through the Gate and waded round the promontory, where the water was only knee deep, until he reached the shore beyond. The rain was still falling in torrents, and he was soaking to the skin ; but, totally indifferent to the elements, he proceeded on his way. Yet he was bare-

headed, and the ragged clothes he wore were only enough to cover his nakedness. Accustomed to exposure and to hardships of all kinds, he did not feel cold ; it would be time enough for that when winter came.

Crossing the desolate shingle, he ascended the Ladder of St. Triffine.

At midnight Rohan Gwenfern stood leaning against the Menhir, and gazing down into the blackness where Kromlaix lay. The rain still continued, and the night was pitch-dark ; but he could see the blood-red gleam of the window lights and the faint flickerings of lanterns carried to and fro. Inland, in the direction of St. Gurlott, streamed glittering rays from the windows of Father Rolland's chapel. Listening intently he could hear at times the cry of a human voice.

It was the Night of the Dead, and he knew that in every house that night the board would be left spread with remnants that the dead might enter and eat. Less houseless and less outcast than himself, they

were welcome, that night at least, wherever they chose to knock ; while he, condemned to a daily living death, only creeping forth from his tomb in the cliffs like any other wandering and restless ghost, dared not even at such a time approach close to any human hearth. He had resisted "even unto blood," and Cain's mark was upon him. For him there was no welcome ; he was outcast for evermore.

As he stood thus, watching and thinking, the bell of the chapel began to peal violently. The sound, coming thus unexpectedly from the darkness, was as the sudden leaping of a pulse in the wrist of a dead man. Almost simultaneously Rohan heard a faint far-off human scream. At first, with the superstitious instinct that had been bred in him and had not yet altogether forsaken him, he thought of the poor outcast ghosts peopling the rainy night, and wondered if the sounds he heard were not wholly supernatural—whether dead hands were not touching the ropes of the chapel bell, while corpses gathered round the belfry and wailed a



weary echo to the sound. But the bell pealed on, and more human cries followed. Something terrible was happening, and the alarm was being given.

He had not long to wait for an explanation. Soon, from inland, came a roaring like the sea, as the mighty torrents approached; shrieks arose from the gulf, on which the black rain still poured; and lights flitted this way and that, moving rapidly along the ground. He heard voices sounding clearer, as the flitting lights came nearer, and on the hill-side opposite lights were moving too. Rohan understood all in a moment. The inundation was coming, and those who had been warned were taking to the heights.

It was now past midnight, and with the rising of the high tide there had risen a faint wind, which, as if to deepen the horror of the catastrophe, now blew back the clouds covering the moon, then at the full. Although the rain continued to fall in torrents, the air was suddenly flooded with a watery gleam, and the village stood revealed in silhouette, with the black tide glistening coldly at its

feet ; and above it, approaching with terrific rapidity from the inland valley, and towering up like a great wall, rolled the Flood. Simultaneously, from a hundred throats, rose horror-stricken screams ; and Rohan distinctly beheld, on the slope beneath him, the human figures clustering and looking down. Meantime, all seemed quiet down in the village itself : the lights gleamed faintly in the windows, and the moonlight lay on the dark roofs, on the empty streets, on the *caloges* close to the water's edge, and on the black line of smacks and skiffs which now floated, as if at anchor, on the high tide.

Again the clouds covered the moon, and the picture of Kromlaix was hidden. Amidst the darkness, with a roaring like that of a strong sea, the Flood entered the village and began its dreadful work of destruction and of death. It was dreadful to stand up there on the hill-side, and to hear the unseen waters struggling in the black gulf, like a snake strangling its victim and stifling his dying cries. The tumult continued, deadened to a heavy roar, through the heart of which

pierced sharp shrieks and piteous calls for help. One by one the lights were extinguished. Like a Thug strangler crawling and killing in the night, the waters ran from place to place, feeling for their prey.

When the clouds again drifted off the face of the moon, and things were again dimly visible, the Flood had met the Tide, and wherever the eye fell a black waste of water surrounded the houses, many of which were flooded to the roofs; the main street was a brawling river, and the lanes on all sides were its tributary streams; many of the boats had driven from shore and were rocking up and down as if on a stormy sea; and there was a sound in the air as of an earthquake, broken only by frantic human cries. The desolation was complete, but the destruction had only just begun. From the inland valley fresh torrents were tumultuously flowing to recruit the floods; so that the waters were every moment rising; and the tide, flowing into the streets, mingled with the rivers of rain. Under the fury of the first attack many buildings had fallen,

and the fierce washing of the waters was rapidly undermining others. And still there was no sign of the cessation of the rain. Deluge was pouring upon deluge. It seemed as if the wrath of Heaven had only just begun.





## CHAPTER IX.

“MID WATERS WILD.”

**S**ITUATED apart, some distance from the main village, and built close upon the sea-shore under the shelter of the eastern crag, the house of Mother Gwenfern stood, with several other scattered abodes, far out of danger. The only peril which seemed to threaten it came from the high tide, which that night rose nearly to the threshold, and, augmented by the rains of the flood, surged threateningly close upon it. Leading from the cottage to the heights above was a rocky path, and on this, gazing awe-stricken in the direction of the village, stood Mother Gwenfern, gaunt

as a spectre in the flying gleams of moonlight. Around her gathered several neighbours, chiefly women and children, the latter crying in terror, the former crouching on the ground. Hard by was a group of men, including Mikel Grallon.

Little had been said; the situation was too appalling for words. While the flood played tiger-like with its victim, the women prayed wildly and the men crossed themselves again and again. From time to time an exclamation arose when the moon looked out and showed how the work of destruction was progressing.

"Holy Virgin! old Plouët's house is down!"

"Look—there was a light in the *cabaret*, but now it is all black!"

"They are screaming out yonder!"

"Hark, there!—it is another roof falling!"

"Merciful God! how black it is! One would say it was the Last Judgment!"

The heights on each side of the village were now dotted with black figures, many carrying lights. It was clear that, owing to

the superstitious customs of the night, many of the population had made good their escape. It was no less certain, however, that many others must have perished, or be perishing, amid the raging waters or in the submerged dwellings. Hope of escape or rescue there seemed none. Until the flood abated nothing could be saved.

The group of men on the face of the cliff continued to gaze on and mutter among themselves.

"The tide is still rising," said Mikel Grallon, in a low voice. He was comparatively calm, for his house, being situated apart from the main village, had so far escaped the fury of the inundation.

"It has nearly an hour yet to flow!" said another of the men.

"And *then!*" cried Grallon, significantly. All the men crossed themselves. Another hour of destruction, and what would then be left of Kromlaix and of those poor souls who still lingered within it?

As they stood whispering a figure rapidly descended the path from the heights above

them, and, joining the group, called out the name of Mikel Grallon. The moon was once more hidden, and it was impossible to distinguish faces.

"Who wants Mikel Grallon? I am here!"

The new comer replied in a voice full of excitement and terror.

"It is I, Gildas Derval! Mikel, we are in despair. The old one and all the rest are safe up there: all of our family are safe but my sister Marcelle. Holy Virgin protect her, but she is in the house, out yonder amid the flood. My uncle is mad, and we are heart-broken. Can she not be saved?"

"She is in God's hands," cried an old man. "No man can help her now."

Gildas uttered a moan of misery, for he was really fond of his sister. Mother Gwen-fern, who stood close by and had heard the conversation, now approached, and demanded in her cold, clear voice—

"Can nothing be done? Are there no boats?"

"Boats!" echoed Mikel Grallon. "One might as well go to sea in a shell as face the



flood in any boat this night ; but, for all that, boats there are none. They are all out yonder, where the flood meets the tide, save those that are already carried out to sea."

The widow raised her wild arms to heaven, murmuring Marcelle's name aloud. Gildas Derval almost began to blubber in the fury of his grief.

"Ah God! that I should come back from the great wars to see such a night as this! I have always had bad luck, but this is the worst. My poor Marcelle! Look you, before I went away she tied a holy medal around my neck, and it kept me from harm. Ah, she was a good little thing! and must she die?"

"The blessed Virgin keep her!" cried Mikel Grallon; "what can we do?"

"It is not only Marcelle Derval," said the old man who had already spoken; "it is not only one, but many, that shall be taken this night. God be praised, I have neither wife nor child to die so sad a death."

As the speaker finished and reverently crossed his breast, another voice broke the silence.

"Who says there are no boats?" it demanded in strange sharp tones.

"I," answered Mikel Grallon. "Who speaks?"

There was no reply, but a dark figure, pushing through the group of men, rapidly descended the crag in the direction of the sea.

"Mother of God!" whispered Grallon, as if struck by a sudden thought, "it is Gwenfern."

Immediately several voices cried aloud, "Is it thou, Rohan Gwenfern?" and Rohan—for it was he—answered from the darkness: "Yes; come this way!"

In the great terror and solemnity of the moment no one seemed astonished at Rohan's appearance, and, strange to say, no one, with the exception perhaps of Mikel Grallon, dreamed of laying hands on the deserter. The apparition of the hunted and desperate man seemed perfectly in keeping with all the horrors of that night. Silently the men followed him down to the shore. The tide was now lapping at the very door of his

mother's cottage. He paused, looking down at the water, and surrounded by the men.

"Where are all the rafts?" he asked.

"The rafts! What raft could live out yonder?" cried Gildas Derval; and he added, in a whisper to Mikel Grallon, "My cousin is mad."

At that moment Rohan's foot struck against a black mass washing on the very edge of the sea. Stooping down he discovered, by touch rather than by eye-sight, that it was one of those smaller rafts which were rudely constructed at that season of the year for the purpose of gathering the *goëmon* or sea-wrack from the reefs. It consisted of several trunks of trees and tree branches, crossed with fragments of old barrels, and lashed together with thick slippery ropes twisted out of ocean-tangle. A man might safely in dead calm weather pilot such a raft when loaded, letting it drift with the tide or pushing it with a pole along the shallows; and that it had quite recently been in use was clear from the fact that it was still partially loaded and kept under water by clinging masses of slippery weed.

As Rohan bent over the raft the moon shone out in full brilliance, and the village was again illumined. The flood roared loudly as ever, and the black waters of the sea seemed nearly level with the roofs of the most low-lying dwellings. Upon the edge where flood and sea met, the waters boiled like a cauldron, and *débris* of all descriptions came rushing down in the arms of the rivers of rain. There was another heavy crash, as of houses falling in. As if the terror had reached its completion, the rain now ceased, and the moon continued visible for many minutes together.

"Quick! bring me a pole or an oar!" cried Rohan, turning to his companions.

Several men ran rapidly along the beach in quest of what he sought; for though they did not quite understand how he intended to act, and although, moreover, they believed that to launch forth on the raft was to put his life in jeopardy, they were under the spell of his stronger nature, and offered neither suggestion nor opposition.

"Rohan! my son!" cried Mother Gwen-

fern, creeping down and holding him by the hand ; “ what are you going to do ? ”

“ I am going to Marcelle Derval ! ”

“ But you will die ! you will perish in the waters ! ”

In the excitement of the moment Mother Gwenfern, like all the rest, forgot the man’s actual relation to society, forgot that his life was forfeited, and that all hands would have been ready, under other circumstances, to drag him to the guillotine. All she remembered was his present danger ; that he was going to certain death.

In answer, Rohan only laughed strangely. Seizing a large oar from Gildas Derval, who ran up with it at that moment, he sprang on the raft and pushed from shore. Under his weight, the raft swayed violently and sank almost under water.

“ Come back ! come back ! ” cried Mother Gwenfern ; but, with vigorous pushes of the oar, which he thrust to the bottom and used as a pole, Rohan moved rapidly away. For better security, since the raft seemed in danger of capsizing, he sank on his knees,

and thus, partially immersed in the cold waters that flowed over the slippery planks, he disappeared into the darkness.

The men looked at one another shuddering.

"As well die that way," muttered Mikel Grallon, "as *another* !"





## CHAPTER X.

MARCELLE.

**T**HE wind had risen, and was blowing gently off the land ; and the sea, at the confluence of flood and tide, was broken into white waves. As Rohan approached the vicinity of the submerged village his situation became perilous, for it was quite clear that the raft could not live long in those angry waters. Nevertheless, fearlessly, and with a certain fury, he forced the raft on by rowing, now at one side, now at another. Though the work was tedious, it was work in which he was well skilled, and he was soon tossing in the broken water below the village. The tide all round him was strewn with *débris* of all kinds—trunks of trees, frag-

ments of wooden furniture, bundles of straw, thatch from sunken roofs—and it required no little care to avoid perilous collisions.

The moon was shining clearly, so that he had now an opportunity of perceiving the extent of the disaster. The houses and *caloges* lying just above high-water mark were covered to the very roofs, and all around them the sea itself was surging and boiling; while above them the buildings of the main village loomed disastrously amid a gleaming waste of boiling pools, muddy rivers and streams, and stagnant canals. Many dwellings, undermined by the washing of the torrents, had fallen in, and others were tottering.

A heavy roar still came from the direction whence the flood had issued, but it was clear that the full fury of the inundation had ceased. Nevertheless, it being scarcely high tide, it was impossible to tell what horrors were yet in store; for though the rivers of rain in the main streets were growing still, the water was working subtly and terribly at the foundations of the houses.



How many living souls had perished could not yet be told. Some, doubtless, dwelling in one-storied buildings, had been found in their beds and quietly smothered, almost before they could utter a cry. Fortunately, however, the greater portion of the population had been astir, and had been able to escape a calamity which would otherwise have been universal.

Eighty or a hundred yards from shore a crowd of unwieldy vessels, with masts lowered, tossed at anchor ; others had floated off the land and were being blown farther and farther out to sea ; and here and there in the waters around were drifting nets which had been swept away from the stakes where they had been left to dry. More than once the raft struck against dead sheep and cattle, floating partially submerged, and as it drifted past the nets Rohan saw, deep down in the tangled folds, something which glimmered like a human face.

Once among the troubled waters, he found it quite impossible to navigate the raft. The waters pouring downward drove it back

towards the floating craft and threatened to carry it out to sea. At last, to crown all, the rotten ropes of tangle gave way, the trunks and staves fell apart, and Rohan found himself struggling among the troubled waves of the tide.

He was a strong swimmer, but his strength had been terribly reduced by trouble and privation. Grasping the oar with one hand and partially supporting himself by its aid, he struck out to the nearest of the deserted fishing craft; reaching which, he clung on to the bowsprit chain and drew his body partially out of the water. As he did so, he espied floating a few yards distant, at the stern of a smack, a small boat like a ship's "dingy."

To swim to the boat, and to drag himself into it by main force, was the work of only a few minutes. He then discovered to his joy that it contained a pair of paddles. Unfortunately, however, it was so leaky and so full of water that his weight brought it down almost to the gunwale, and threatened to sink it altogether.

Every moment was precious. Seizing the rope by which the boat was attached to the smack, he climbed up over the stern of the latter, and searching in its hold found a rusty iron pot. With this he in a few minutes baled out the punt; then seizing the paddles, he pulled wildly towards the shore.

The work was easy until he again reached the confluence of flood and tide. Here the waters were pouring down so rapidly, and were moreover so strewn with dangerous *débris*, that he was again and again in imminent danger.

Exerting all his extraordinary strength, he forced the boat between the roofs of the *caloges*, and launched out into the stream of the main river pouring from the village. Swept back against a nearly covered *caloge*, he was almost capsized; but, leaping out on the roof, he rapidly baled his boat, which was already filling with water. Fortunately the flood was decreasing in violence and the tide had turned, but it nevertheless seemed a mad and hopeless task to force the frail boat further in the face of such obstacles. The

main street was a rapid river, filled with great boulders washed down from the valley, and with flotsam and jetsam of all kinds. To row against it was utterly impossible ; the moment he endeavoured to do so he was swept back and almost swamped.

Another man, even if he had possessed the foolhardiness to venture so far, would now have turned and fled. But perhaps because his forfeited life was no longer a precious thing to him, perhaps because his strength and courage always increased with opposition, perhaps because he had determined once and for ever to show how a "coward" could act when brave men were quaking in their shoes, Rohan Gwenfern gathered all his strength together for a mighty effort. Rowing to the side of the river, he threw down his oars and clutched hold of the solid masonry of a house ; and then dragging the boat along by main force from wall to wall, he rapidly accomplished a distance of fifteen or twenty yards. Pausing then, and keeping firm hold of the projecting angle of a roof, while the flood was boiling

past, he beheld floating among the other *débris*, the body of a child.

Repeating the same manœuvre, he again dragged the boat on; again rested; again renewed his toil; until he had reached the very heart of the village. Here fortunately the waters were less rapid, and he could force his way along with greater ease. But at every yard of the way the picture grew more pitiful, the feeling of devastation more complete. The lower houses were submerged, and some of the larger ones had fallen. On many of the roofs were gathered groups of human beings, kneeling and stretching out their hands to heaven.

“ Help ! help ! ” they shrieked, as Gwenfern appeared ; but he only waved his hand and passed on.

At last, reaching the narrow street in which stood the Corporal’s dwelling, he discovered to his joy that the house was still intact. The flood here was very swift and terrible, so that at first it almost swept him away. He now to his horror perceived, floating seaward, many almost naked corpses. Opposite to

the Corporal's house a large barn had fallen in, and within the walls numbers of cattle were floating dead.

The Corporal's house consisted, as the reader is aware, of two stories, the upper forming a sort of attic in the gable of the roof. The waters had risen so high that the door and windows of the lower story were entirely hidden, and a powerful current was sweeping along right under the window of the little upper room where Marcelle slept.

Ah God! if she did not live! If the cruel flood had found her below, and before she could escape had seized her and destroyed her like so many of the rest!

The house was still some twenty yards away and very difficult to reach. Clinging with one hand to the window-frame of one of the houses below, Rohan gathered all his strength, baled out his boat, and then prepared to drag it on. To add to the danger of his position the wind had now grown quite violent, blowing with the current and in the direction of the sea. If once his strength

failed, and he was swept into the full fury of the mid-current, the result must be almost certain death.

With the utmost difficulty he managed to row the boat to the window of a cottage two doors from that of the Corporal ; here, finding further progress by water impracticable, for the current was quite irresistible, he managed to clamber up to the roof, and, clutching in his hand the rope of the boat, which was fortunately long, to scramble desperately on. At this point his skill as a cragsman stood him in good stead. At last, after extraordinary exertions, he reached the very gable of the house he sought, and, standing erect in the boat, clutched at the window-sill. In a moment the boat was swept from beneath his feet, and he found himself dangling by his hands, while his feet trailed in the water under him.

Still retaining, wound round one wrist, the end of the rope which secured the boat, he hung for a few seconds suspended ; then putting out his strength and performing a trick in which he was expert, he drew himself

bodily up until one knee rested on the sill. In another moment he was safe. On either side of the window were clumsy iron hooks, used for keeping the casement open when it was thrown back. Securing the rope to one of these by a few rapid turns, he dashed the casement open and sprang into the room.

“Marcelle! Marcelle!”

He was answered instantly by an eager cry. Marcelle, who had been on her knees in the middle of the room, rose almost in terror. Surprised in her sleep, she had given herself up for lost, but with her characteristic presence of mind she had hurriedly donned a portion of her attire. Her feet, arms, and neck were bare, and her hair fell loose upon her shoulders.

“It is I—Rohan! I have come to save you, and there is no time to lose. Come away!”

While he spoke the house trembled violently, as if shaken to its foundations. Marcelle gazed on her lover as if stupefied; his appearance seemed unaccountable and preternatural. Stepping across the room, the



floor of which seemed to quake beneath his feet, he threw his arms around her and drew her towards the window.

“Do not be afraid!” he said, in a hollow voice. “You will be saved yet, Marcelle. Come!”

He did not attempt any fonder greeting; his whole manner was that of a man burthened by the danger of the hour. But Marcelle, whom recent events had made somewhat hysterical, clung to him wildly and lifted up her white face to his.

“Is it thou, indeed? When the flood came I was dreaming of thee, and when I went to the window and saw the great waters and heard the screaming of the folk I knelt and prayed to the good God. Rohan! Rohan!”

“Come away! there is no time to lose.”

“How didst thou come? One would say thou hadst fallen from heaven. Ah, thou hast courage, and the people lie!”

He drew her to the window, and pointed down to the boat which still swung below the sill. Then in hurried whispers he besought her to gather all her strength and to

act implicitly as he bade her, that her life might be saved.

Seizing the rope with his left hand, he drew the boat towards him until it swung close under the window. He then assisted her through the window, and bade her cling to his right arm with both hands while he let her down into the boat. Fearful but firm, she obeyed, and in another minute had dropped safely down. Loosening the rope and still keeping it in his hand, he leapt after her. In another instant they were drifting seaward on the flood.

It was like a ghastly dream. Swept along on the turbid stream, amid floating trees, dead cattle and sheep, flotsam and jetsam of all kinds, Marcelle saw the houses flit by her in the moonlight, and heard troubled voices crying for help. Seated before her, Rohan managed the paddles, restraining as far as possible the impetuous progress of the boat. Again and again they were in imminent peril from collision, and as they proceeded the boat rapidly filled. Under

Rohan's directions, however, Marcelle baled out the water, while he piloted the miserable craft with the oars.

At last they swept out into the open sea, where the tide, beaten by the wind and meeting with the flood, was "chopping" and boiling in short sharp waves. The danger was now almost over. With rapid strokes Rohan rowed in the direction of the shore whence he had started on the raft. Gathered there to receive him, with flashing torches and gleaming lanterns, was a crowd of women and men.

After a moment's hesitation he ran the boat in upon the strand.

"Leap out!" he cried to his companion.

Springing on the shore, Marcelle was almost immediately clasped in the arms of her mother, who was eagerly giving thanks to God. Amazed and aghast, the Corporal stood by with his nephews, gazing out at the dark figure of Rohan.

Before a word could be said Rohan had pushed off again.

"Stay, Rohan Gwenfern!" said a voice.

Rohan stood up erect in the boat.

“Are there no men among you,” he cried, “that you stand there useless and afraid? There are more perishing out there, women and children. Jàn Goron!”

“Here,” answered a voice.

“The flood is going down, but the houses are still falling in, and lives are being lost. Come with me, and we will find boats.”

“I will come,” said Jàn Goron; and wading up to the waist, he climbed into the boat with Rohan. Marcelle uttered a low cry as the two pushed off in the direction of the village.

“God forgive me!” murmured the Corporal. “He is a brave man!”

The tide was now ebbing rapidly; and though the village was still submerged, the floods were no longer rising. Nevertheless, the devastation to a certain extent continued, and every moment added to the peril of those survivors who remained in the village.

Aided by Jàn Goron, Rohan soon dis-

covered, among the cluster of boats at anchor, several large fishing skiffs. Springing into one, and abandoning the small boat, the two men managed with the aid of the paddles to row to the shore, towing astern another skiff similar to the one in which they sat. A loud shout greeted them as they ran into land.

Totally forgetful of his personal position, Rohan now rapidly addressed the men in tones of command. Oars were found and brought, and soon both skiffs were manned by powerful crews and pulling in the direction of the village. In the stern of one stood Rohan, guiding and inspiring his companions.

What followed was only a repetition of Rohan's former adventure, shorn of much of its danger and excitement. The inundation was now comparatively subdued, and the men found little difficulty in rowing their boats through the streets. Soon the skiffs were full of women and children, half fainting and still moaning with fear. After depositing these in safety, the rescuing party returned

to the village and continued their work of mercy.

It was weary work, and it lasted for hours. As the night advanced other boats appeared, some from neighbouring villages, and moved with flashing lights about the dreary waste of waters. It was found necessary again and again to enter the houses and to search the upper portions for paralyzed women and helpless children; and at great peril many creatures were rescued thus. Where the peril was greatest, Rohan Gwenfern led: he seemed, indeed, to know no fear.

At last, when the first peep of dawn came, all the good work was done, and not a living soul remained to be saved. As the dim chill light rose on the scene of desolation, showing more clearly the flooded village with its broken gables and ruined walls, Rohan stepped on the shore close to his mother's cottage, and found himself almost immediately surrounded by an excited crowd. Now for the first time the full sense of his extraordinary position came upon him, and he drew back like a man expecting violence.

Ragged, half naked, haggard, ghastly, and dripping wet, he looked a strange spectacle. Murmurs of wonder and pity arose as he gazed on the people. A woman whose two children he had saved that night rushed forward, and with many appeals to the Virgin kissed his hands. He saw the Corporal standing by, pale and troubled, looking on the ground; and near to him Marcelle, with her passionate shining white face towards him.

Half stupefied, he moved up the strand. The crowd parted, to let him pass.

“In the name of the Emperor!” cried a voice. A hand was placed upon his arm. Turning quietly, he encountered the eyes of Mikel Grallon.

Grallon’s interference was greeted with angry murmurs, for the popular sympathy was all with the hero of the night.

“Stand back, Mikel Grallon!” cried many voices.

“It is the deserter!” said Grallon, stubbornly; and he repeated, “In the name of the Emperor!”

Before he could utter another word he found himself seized in a pair of powerful arms and hurled to the ground. Rohan Gwenfern himself had not lifted a finger. The attack came from quite another quarter. The old Corporal, red with rage, had sprung upon Grallon, and was fiercely holding him down.

Scarcely paying any attention, Rohan passed quietly through the crowd and rapidly ascended the cliff. Pausing on the summit, he looked down quietly for some seconds; then he disappeared.

But the Corporal still held Mikel Grallon down, shaking him as a furious old hound shakes a rat.

“In the name of the Emperor!” he cried, angrily echoing the prostrate man’s own words. “Beast, lie still!”







## CHAPTER XI.

### THE GROWING OF THE CLOUD.

**A**ND now the darkness of winter fell, and days and weeks and months passed anxiously away.

Down at lonely Kromlaix, by the sea, things were sadder than they had been for many winters past. When the flood subsided, and the full extent of the desolation could be apprehended, it was found that more lives had been lost than had at first been calculated. Many poor souls had perished quietly in their beds; others, while endeavouring to escape, had been crushed under the ruins of their crumbling homes. The mortality was chiefly among women and

little children. Although the greater part of the corpses were recovered and buried with holy rites in the little churchyard, some had been carried out to the bottom of the deep ocean and were never seen again.

When the Corporal went down to take stock of his dwelling, he found that a portion of the walls had yielded, and that some of the roof had fallen in ; so that Marcelle, had she remained a little longer in the house on that fatal night, would most certainly have encountered a terrible and cruel death. It took many a long day to rebuild the ruined portion of the dwelling, and to make good the grievous loss in damaged household goods ; and not until the new year had come boisterously in, was the place decently habitable again.

Meantime, Famine had been crawling about the village, hand in hand with Death, for much grain had been destroyed,—and when grain fails, the poor must starve and die. And then, following close upon the flood, had come the news of the new conscription of 300,000 men, of which little

Kromlaix had again to supply its share. Well might the poor souls think that God was against them, and that there was neither hope nor comfort anywhere under Heaven.

Over all these troubles we let the curtain fall. Our purpose in these pages is not to harrow up the heart with pictures of human torture—whether caused by the cruelty of Nature or the tyranny of Man—nor to light up with a lurid pen the darkness of unrecorded sorrows. It is rather our wish, while telling a tale of human patience and endurance, to reveal from time to time those higher spiritual issues which fortify the thoughts of those who love their kind, and which make poetry possible in a world whose simple prose is misery and despair. Let us, therefore, for a time darken the stage on which our actors come and go. When the curtain arises again, it is to the sullen music of the great Invasion of 1814.

Like hungry wolves the Grand Army was being driven back before the scourges of avenging nations. For many a long year France had sent forth her legions to feed

upon and destroy other lands; now it was her turn to taste the cup she had so freely given. Across her troubled plains, moving this way and that; and shrieking to that *δαίμων* who seemed at last to have deserted him, flew Bonaparte. Already in outlying districts arose the old spectre of the White, causing foolish enthusiasts to trample on the tricolor. Mysterious voices were heard again in old châteaux, down in lonely Brittany. Loyalists and Republicans alike were beginning to cry out aloud even in the public ways, despite the decree of death on all those who should express Bourbon sympathies or give assistance to the Allies. Duras had armed Touraine, and the Abbé Jacquilt was busy in La Vendée.

Meantime, to those honest people who hated strife, the terror deepened. While the log blazed upon the hearth and the cold winds blew without, those who sat within listened anxiously and started at every sound; for there was no saying in what district the ubiquitous and child-eating Cossack (savage forerunner of the irrepressible Uhlan of a

later and wickeder invasion) might appear next, pricking on his pigmy steed. The name of Blucher became a household word, and men were learning another name,—that of Wellington.

The hour came when Bonaparte, surrounded and in tribulation, might have saved his Imperial Crown by assenting to the treaty of Chatillon; but, over-mastered by faith in his destiny, and a prey, moreover, to the most violent passions, he let the saving hour glide by, and manœuvred until it was too late. By the treaty of March, 1814, Austria, Russia, Prussia, and England bound themselves individually to keep up an army of 150,000 men, until France was reduced within her ancient limits; and by the same treaty, and for the same purpose, that of carrying on the war, four millions were advanced by the “shopkeepers” of England. Nevertheless, the Emperor, still trusting in his lurid star, continued to insist on the imperial boundaries. So insisting, he marched upon Blucher at Soissons, and began the last act of the war.

Thus the terrible winter passed away. Spring came, and brought the violet ; but the fields and lanes were still darkened with strife, and all over France still lay the Shadow of the Sword.

Meantime, what had become of Rohan Gwenfern ? After that night of the great flood he made no sign, and all search for him virtually ceased. It was clearly impossible that he could be still in hiding out among the cliffs, for the severe weather had set in : no man could have lived through it under such conditions. That Rohan was not dead Marcelle knew from various sources, although she had no idea where he was to be found ; and she blessed the good God, who had preserved him so far, and who would perhaps forgive all his wild revolt, for the sake of the good deeds that he had done on the terrible Night of the Dead. Doubtless some dark roof was sheltering him now, and, fortunately, men were too full of affairs to think much about a solitary revolter. Ah, if he had not killed Pipriac ! If the guilt of blood were off

his hands! Then the good Emperor might have forgiven him and taken him back, like the prodigal son.

In one respect, at least, Marcelle was happy. She no longer lay under the reproach of having loved a coward: her lover had justified himself and *her*; and he had vindicated his courage in a way which it was impossible to mistake. Ah, yes, he was brave! and if Master Arfoll and other wicked counsellors had not put a spell upon him, he would have shown his bravery on the battle-field! It was still utterly inscrutable to her that Rohan should have acted as he did. General principles she could not understand, and any abstract proposition concerning the wickedness and cowardice of War itself would have been as incomprehensible to her as a problem in trigonometry or a page of Spinoza. War was one of the institutions of the world—

“It had been since the world began,  
And would be till its close.”

It was as much a thing of course as getting

married or going to confession ; and it was, moreover, one of the noble professions in which brave men, like her uncle, might serve their ruler and the State.

Although it was now subtly qualified by anxiety for her lover's fate, her enthusiasm in the Imperial cause did not in any degree abate. Marcelle was one of those women who cling the more tenaciously to a belief the more it is questioned and decried, and the more it approaches the state of a forlorn faith ; so that as the Emperor's star declined, and people began to look forward eagerly for its setting, her adoration rose, approaching fanaticism in its intensity. It was just the same with Corporal Derval. All through that winter the Corporal suffered untold agonies, but his confidence and his faith rose with the darkening of the Imperial sphere. Night after night he perused the bulletins, eagerly construing them to his master's triumph and glory. His voice was loud in its fulminations against the Allies, especially against the English. He kept the Napoleonic pose more habitually than ever—and



he prophesied ; but, alas ! his voice now was as the voice of one crying in the wilderness, and there were none to hearken.

For, as we have already more than once hinted, Kromlaix was too near to the châteaux not to keep within it many sparks of Legitimist flame, ready to burn forth brilliantly at any moment ; and although Corporal Derval had been a local power, he had ruled more by fear than by love, receiving little opposition because opposition was scarcely safe. When, however, the tide began to turn, he found, like his master, that he had been miscalculating the true feelings of his neighbours. Again and again he was openly contradicted and talked down. When he spoke of "the Emperor," others began to speak boldly of "the King." He heard daily, in his walks and calls, enough "blasphemy" to make his hair stand on end, and to make him think with horror of another Deluge. One evening, walking by the sea, he saw several bonfires burning up on the hill-sides. The same night he heard that the Duc de Berri had landed in Jersey.

Among those who seemed quietly turning their coats from parti-red to white was Mikel Grallon; and, indeed, we doubt not that honest Mikel would have turned his skin also, if that were possible, and if it could be shown to be profitable. He seemed now to have abandoned the idea of marrying Marcelle, but he none the less bitterly resented her fidelity to his rival. As soon as the tide of popular feeling was fairly turned against Napoleon, Grallon quietly ranged himself on the winning side, secretly poisoning the public mind against the Corporal, in whom, ere long, people began to see the incarnation of all they most detested and feared. Things grew, until Corporal Derval, so far from possessing any of his old influence, became the most unpopular man in Kromlaix. He represented the fading superstition, which was already beginning to be regarded with abhorrence.

The Corporal's health had failed a little that winter, and these changes preyed painfully on his mind. He began to show unmistakable signs of advancing age: his voice

lost much of its old ring and volume, his eyes grew dimmer, his step less firm. It required vast quantities of tobacco to soothe the trouble of his heart, and he would sit whole evenings silent in the kitchen, smoking and looking at the fire. When he mentioned Rohan's name, which was but seldom, it was with a certain gentleness very unusual to him; and it seemed to Marcelle, watching him, that he quietly reproached himself with having been unjust to his unfortunate nephew.

"I am sure uncle is not well," Marcelle said in a low voice, glancing across at the Corporal sitting by the fire.

"There is only one thing that can cure him," said Gildas, whom she addressed, "and that is, a great Victory."





## CHAPTER XII.

“VIVE LE ROI!”

**W**HILE the great campaign was proceeding in the interior, and the leaders of the allied armies were hesitating and deliberating, a hand was waving signals from Paris and beckoning the invaders on. So little confidence had they in their own puissance, and so great, despite their successes, continued their dread of falling into one of those traps which Bonaparte was so cunning in preparing, that they would doubtless have committed fatal delays but for encouragement from within the City.

“You venture nought, when you might venture all !  
Venture again !”

wrote this hand to the Emperor Alexander,  
The hand was that of Talleyrand.

So it came to pass, late in the month of March, that crowds of affrighted peasants, driving before them their carts and horses and their flocks and herds, and leading their wives and children, flocked into Paris, crying that the invaders were approaching on Paris in countless hosts. The alarm sounded, the great City poured out its swarms into the streets, and all eyes were gazing in the direction of Montmartre. Vigorous preparations were made to withstand a siege—Joseph Bonaparte encouraging the people by assurances that the Emperor would soon be at hand.

“It is a bad look out for the enemy,” said Corporal Derval nervously, when this news reached him. “Every step towards Paris is a step further away from their *supplies*. Do you think the Emperor does not know what he is about? It is a trap, and Paris will swallow them like a great mouth—snap! one bite, and they are gone. Wait.”

A few days later came the news of the flight of the Empress. The Corporal turned livid, but forced a laugh.

"Women are in the way when there is to be fighting. Besides, she does not want to see her relations, the Austrians, eaten up alive."

The next day came the terrible announcement that Paris was taken. The Corporal started up as if a knife had entered his heart.

"The enemy in Paris!" he gasped. "Where is the Emperor?"

Ah, where indeed? For once in his life Bonaparte had fallen into a trap himself, and while Paris was being taken, had been lured towards the frontier out of the way. It was useless now to rush, almost solitary, to the rescue; yet the Emperor, seated in his carriage, rolled towards the metropolis, far in advance of his army. His generals met him in the environs, and warned him back. He shrieked, threatened, implored; but it was too late. He then heard with horror that the authorities had welcomed the invaders, and that the Imperial government was virtually

overthrown. Heartsick and mad, he rushed to Fontainebleau.

To the old Corporal, sitting by his fireside, this news came also in due time. Father Rolland was there when it came, and he shook his head solemnly.

“The allied sovereigns refuse to treat with the Emperor,” he read aloud. “Well, well!”

This “well, well” might mean either wonder, or sympathy, or approval, just as the hearer felt inclined to construe it; for Father Rolland was a philosopher, and took things calmly as they came. Even a miracle done in broad day would not have astonished him, much; to his simple mind, all human affairs were miraculous, and miraculously commonplace. But the veteran whom he had addressed was not so calm. He trembled, and tried to storm.

“They refuse!” he cried, with a feeble attempt at his old manner. “You will say next that the mice refuse to treat with the lion. Soul of a crow! what are these emperors and kings? Go to! The Little Corporal has unmade kings by the dozen, and he has eaten

empires for breakfast. I tell you, in a little while the Emperor Alexander will be glad enough to kiss his feet. As for the Emperor of Austria, his conduct is shameful, for is he not our Emperor's kith and kin?”

“Do you think there will be more fighting, my Corporal?” demanded the little priest.

The Corporal set his lips tight together, and nodded his head automatically.

“It is easier to put your hand in the lion's mouth than to pull it out again. When the Emperor is desperate, he is terrible—all the world knows that; and now that he has been trampled upon and insulted, he is not likely to rest till he has obliterated these *canaille* from the face of the earth.”

“I heard news to-day,” observed Gildas, looking up from his place in the ingle, and joining in the conversation for the first time. “They say the Duc de Berri has landed again in Jersey, and that the King——”

Before he could complete the sentence, his uncle uttered a cry of rage and protestation.

“The King! Malediction! What king?”



Gildas grinned awkwardly.

“King Louis, of course!”

“*A bas le Bourbon!*” thundered the Corporal, pale as death, and trembling with rage from head to foot. “Never name him, Gildas Derval! King Louis! King Capet!”

The little *curé* rose quietly and put on his hat.

“I must go,” he said; “but let me tell you, my Corporal, that your language is too violent. The Bourbons were our kings by divine right, and they were good friends to the Church; and if they should return to prosperity, I, for one, will give them my allegiance.”

So saying, Father Rolland saluted the household and quietly took his departure. The Corporal sank trembling into a chair.

“If they should return!” he muttered. “Ah, well, there is no danger of *that* so long as the Little Corporal is alive!”

Corporal Derval was wrong. A fanatic to the heart's core, he did not at all comprehend the true fatality of the situation; and although

his thoughts were full of secret alarm, he hoped, believed, and trusted still. The idea of the total overthrow of the god of his faith never occurred to him at all; as easily might the conception of the fall of Mahomet have entered the brain of a proselytising Mussulman. As for the return of the exiled family—why, that, on the very face of it, was too ridiculous!

He was, of course, well acquainted with the state of popular sentiment, and he knew how strong the Legitimist party was even in his own village. Here, too, was little Father Rolland, who had no political feelings to speak of, and who had served under the Emperor so long, beginning to side with the enemies of truth and justice! The priest was a good fellow, but to hear *him* talk about “divine right” was irritating. As if there was any right more divine than the sovereignty of the Emperor!

A few mornings afterwards, as the Corporal was preparing to sally forth he was stopped by Marcelle.

“Where are you going?” she said, placing herself in his way.

She was very pale, and there was a red mark around her eyes as if she had been crying.

“I am going down to old Plouët to get shaved,” said the Corporal; “and I shall hear the news. Soul of a crow! what is the matter with the girl? Why do you look at me like that?”

Marcelle, without replying, gazed imploringly at her mother and at Gildas, who were standing on the hearth—the former agitated, like her daughter, the latter phlegmatically chewing a straw. Wheeling round to them, the Corporal continued—“Is there anything wrong? Speak, if that is so!”

“There is bad news,” answered the widow, in a low voice.

“About Hoël!”

The widow shook her head.

“Do not go out this morning,” said Marcelle, crossing the kitchen and quietly closing the door. As she did so, there came from without a loud sound of voices cheering, and simultaneously there was a clatter as of feet running down the road.

"What is that?" cried the Corporal. "Something has happened. Speak! do not keep me in suspense."

He stood pale and trembling; and as he stood the finger of age was heavy upon him, marking every line and wrinkle in his powerful face, making his cheeks more sunken, his eyes more darkly dim. A proud man, he had suffered tormenting humiliations of late, and had missed much of the respect and sense of power which had formerly made his life worth having. Add to this, the fact already alluded to, that his physical health had been quietly breaking, and it is easy to understand why he looked the ghost of his old self.

But the veteran's nature was aquiline; and an eagle, even in sickness and amid evil fortune, is an eagle still.

"Speak, Gildas!" he said. "You are a man, and these are only women. What is the meaning of all this? Why do they seek to detain me in the house?"

Gildas mumbled something inarticulate, and nudged his mother with his elbow. At

that moment the cheering was repeated. Some gleam of the truth must have flashed upon the Corporal, for he grew still paler and increased his expression of nervous dread.

“ I will tell you, uncle,” cried Marcelle, “ if you will not go out. They are proclaiming the King ! ”

Proclaiming the King ? So far as the Corporal is concerned, they might almost as well proclaim a new God. Have the heavens fallen ? Sits the sun still in his sphere ? The Corporal stared and tottered like a man stupefied. Then, setting his lips tight together, he strode towards the door.

“ Uncle ! ” cried Marcelle, interposing.

“ Stand aside ! ” he cried in a husky voice. “ Don’t make me angry, you women. I am not a child, and I must see for myself. God in Heaven ! I think the world is coming to an end. ”

Throwing the door wide open, he walked into the street.

It was a bright spring morning, much such a morning as when, about a year before, he

had cheerily sallied forth at the head of the conscripts! The village, long since recovered from the effects of the inundation, sparkled in the sunshine. The street was quite empty, and there was no sign of any neighbour bustling about, but as he paused at the door he again heard the sound of shouting far up the village.

Determined to make a personal survey of the state of affairs, Derval stumped up the street, followed closely by Gildas, whom the women had besought to see that his uncle did not get into trouble. In a few minutes they came in sight of a crowd of people of both sexes, who were moving hither and thither as if under the influence of violent excitement. In their midst stood several men, strangers to the Corporal, who were busily distributing white cockades to the men and white rosettes to the girls. These men were well dressed, and one had the air of a gentleman: and indeed he was *Le Sieur Marmont*, proprietor of a neighbouring *château*, but long an absentee from his possessions.

Then Derval distinctly heard the odious

cry, again and again repeated—" *Vive le Roi !  
Vive le Roi !* "

The nobleman, who was elegantly clad in a rich suit of white and blue, had his sword drawn; his wrinkled face was full of enthusiasm.

" *Vive le Roi ! Vive le Sieur Marmont !* " cried the voices.

Among the crowd were many who merely looked on smiling, and a few who frowned darkly; but it was clear that the Bonapartists were in a terrible minority. However, the business that was going forward was quite informal—a mere piece of preparatory incendiarism on the part of Marmont and his friends. News had just come of the Royalist rising in Paris, and the white rose had already begun to blossom in every town.

"What is all this?" growled the Corporal, elbowing his way into the crowd. "Soul of a crow! what does it mean?"

"Have you not heard the news?" shrieked a woman. "The Emperor is dead, and the King is risen."

The nobleman, whose keen eye observed

Derval in a moment, stuck a cockade of white cotton on the point of his sword, and pushed it over politely, across the intervening heads.

"Our friend has not heard," he said with a wicked grin. "See, old fellow, here is a little present. It is not true that the usurper is dead, but he is dethroned—so we are crying '*Vive le Roi.*'"

Many voices shouted again ; and now the Corporal recognized, talking to a tall priest-like man in black who kept close to Marmont, his little friend the *curé*.

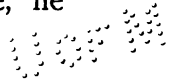
"It is a LIE!" he cried, fixing his eye upon Marmont. "*A bas les Bourbons ! à bas les émigrés !*"

The nobleman's face flushed, and his eye gleamed fiercely.

"What man is this?" he asked between his set teeth.

"Corporal Derval!" cried several voices simultaneously. The tall priest, after a word from Father Rolland, whispered to Marmont, who curled his lips and smiled contemptuously.

"If the old fool were not in his dotage," he





said, "he would deserve to be whipped; but we waste our time with such *canaille*! Come, my friends, to the chapel—let us offer a prayer to Our Blessed Lady, who is bringing the good King back."

The Corporal, who would have joined issue with the very fiend when his blood was up, uttered a great oath, and, flourishing his stick, approached the nobleman. The villagers fell back on either side, and in a moment the two were face to face.

"*A bas le Roi!*" thundered the Corporal.  
 "*A bas les emigrés!*"

Marmont was quite pale now, with anger, not fear. Drawing himself up indignantly, he pointed his sword at the Corporal's heart.

"Keep back, old man, or I shall hurt you!"

But before another syllable could be uttered the Corporal, with a sabre-cut of his heavy stick, had struck the blade with such force that it was broken.

"*A bas le Roi!*" he cried, purple with passion. "*Vive l'Empereur!*"

This was the signal for general confusion.

The Royalist, furious at the insult, endeavoured to precipitate himself on his assailant, but was withheld by his companions, who eagerly besought him to be calm; while the Corporal, on his side, found himself the centre of a shrieking throng of villagers, some of whom aimed savage blows at his unlucky head. It would doubtless have gone ill with him had not Gildas and several other strong fellows fought their way to his side and diligently taken his part. A *mêlée* ensued. Other Bonapartists sided with the minority; blows were freely given and taken; cockades were torn off and trampled on the ground. Fortunately, the combatants were not armed with any dangerous weapons, and few suffered any serious injuries. At the end of some minutes the Corporal found himself standing half stunned, surrounded by his little party, while the crowd of Royalist sympathisers, headed by Marmont, was proceeding up the road in the direction of the Chapel.

When the Corporal recovered from the

full violence of his indignation his heart was very sad. The sight of the nobleman and his friends was ominous, for he knew that these gay-plumaged birds only came out when the air was very loyal indeed. He knew, too, that Marmont, although part of his estates had been restored to the family by the Emperor, had long been a suspected resident abroad; and it was quite certain that his presence there meant that the Bonapartist cause had reached its lowest ebb.

Hastening down into the village, and into the house of Plouët the barber, the veteran eagerly seized the journals, and found there such confirmation of his fears as turned his heart sick and made his poor head whirl wildly round. Tears stood in his old eyes as he read, so that the old horn-spectacles were again and again misted o'er.

“My Emperor! my Master!” he murmured; adding to himself, in much the same words that the great heart-broken King of Israel used of old, “Would to God I might die for thee!”



## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE CORPORAL'S CUP IS FULL.

**A**BOUT the beginning of the month of April a strange rumour spread over France, causing simple folk to gaze at each other aghast, as if the sun were falling out of heaven. It was reported, on good authority, that the Emperor had attempted suicide.

The rumour was immediately contradicted, but not before it had caused grievous heart-ache to many a hero-worshipper, and, among others, to our Corporal. It seemed so terrible that he who had but lately ruled the destinies of Europe should now be a miserable being anxious to quit a world of which he was weary, that to some minds it was

simply inconceivable. If this thing was true, if indeed Bonaparte was at last impotent, and upon his knees, then nothing was safe—neither the stars in their spheres, nor the solid earth revolving in its place—for Chaos was come.

How strange, and yet how brief had been the glory of the man! It seemed but the other day that he was a young general, with all his laurels to win. What a Drama had been enacted in the few short hours since then! And already the last scene was being played—or nearly the last.

It seemed, however, as if the Earth, released from an intolerable burthen, had begun to smile and rejoice; for the primrose had arisen, and the wild roses were lighting their red lamps at the sun, and the birds were come back again to build along the great sea-wall. Clear were the days and bright, with cool winds and sweet rains; so that Leipsic and many a smaller battle-field, well manured by the dead, were growing rich and green, with the promise of abundant harvest.

On such a day of spring Corporal Derval sat on the cliffs overlooking the sea, with a distant view of Kromlaix basking in the light. By his side, distaff in hand, sat Marcelle, a clean white coif upon her head and shoes on her shapely feet. She had coaxed her uncle out that day to smell the fresh air and to sit in the sun, for he had been very frail and irritable of late, and had become a prey to the most violent despondency. He was not one of those men who love Nature, even in a dumb unconscious animal way, and, although the scene around him was very fair, he did not gladden. Sweeter to him the sound of fifes and drums than the soft singing of the thrush! As for prospects, if he could only have seen, coming down the valley, the gleam of bayonets and darkness of artillery, *that* would have been a prospect indeed!

He was very silent, gazing moodily down at the village and over the sea, while Marcelle watched him gently, only now and then saying a few common-place words. They had sat thus for hours, when suddenly the

Corporal started as if he had been shot, and pointed up the valley.

“Look! what’s that?”

Marcelle gazed in the direction indicated, but saw nothing unusual. She turned questioningly to her uncle.

“There! at the Chapel,” he cried, with peevish irritation. “Do you not see something white?”

She gazed again, and her keen eyes at once detected—what his feebler vision had only dimly guessed—that a flag was flying from a pole planted above the belfry of the little building. A Flag, and *white!* She knew in a moment what it betokened, and, though a sharp pain ran through her heart, her first fear was for her uncle. She trembled, but did not answer.

The old man, violently agitated, rose to his feet, gazing at the Chapel as at some frightful vision.

“Look again!” he cried. “Can you not see? What is it, Marcelle?”

Marcelle rose, and, still trembling, gazed piteously into his face. Her eyes were dry,

her lips set firm, her cheeks pale as death. She touched her uncle on the arm, and said in a low voice—

“Come, uncle; let us go home.”

He did not stir, but drawing himself to his height and shading his eyes from the sun, he looked again with a face as grimly set as if he were performing some terrible military duty.

“It is white, and it looks like a flag,” he muttered, as if talking to himself. “Yes, it is a flag and it stirs in the wind.” He added after a minute, “It is the White Flag!—some villain has set it there!”

Just then there rose upon the air the sound of voices cheering, followed by a sharp report as of guns firing. Then he distinguished, flocking on the road near the Chapel, a dark crowd of people moving rapidly hither and thither. It was clear that something extraordinary had occurred; and, indeed, Marcelle knew perfectly the true state of affairs, and had for that reason among others coaxed the veteran out of harm's way. That very morning orders had arrived from St.



Gurlott to hoist the Bourbon *fleur de lys* on the chapels of Kromlaix. Bonaparte's last stake was lost, and the heir of legitimate Kings was hourly expected in Paris.

Corporal Derval had known that it was coming—the last scene, the wreck of all his hope; but his faith had kept firm to the last, and he had listened eagerly for the sign that the lion had burst the net and that the enemies of France—for such he held all the enemies of the Emperor—were overthrown. He was not a praying man, but he had prayed a good deal of late; prayed indeed that God might perfect a miracle and “resurrect” the Empire. So the sight of the emblem of despair, which it certainly was to him, caused a great shock to his troubled heart. He stood gazing and panting and listening, while Marcelle again sought to lead him away.

“*A bas le Bourbon!*” he growled mechanically; then shaking his hand menacingly at the flag, he said, “If there is no other man to tear thee down, *I* will do it, for the Emperor's sake. I will trample on thee as

the Emperor will trample on the King, thy master!"

Marcelle did not often cry, but her eyes were wet now; even wrath was forgotten in pity for the idol of her faith. Despite her uncle's fierce words she saw that his spirit was utterly crushed, that his breast was heaving convulsively, and that his voice was broken. She bade him lean upon her arm to descend the hill; but, trembling and in silence, he sat down again on the green grass. Just then, however, they heard footsteps behind them, and Marcelle, looking over her shoulder, recognised no other than Master Arfoll.

Now, if at that moment she would have avoided one man more than another, that man was the itinerant schoolmaster. His opinions were notorious, and he was associated in her mind with revolt and irreverence of the most offensive kind. His appearance at that particular time was specially startling and painful. He seemed come for the purpose of saying, "I prophesied these things, and you see they have come true."

Marcelle would gladly have escaped, but Master Arfoll was close upon them. Just as the Corporal, noticing her manner, turned and saw who was following, Master Arfoll came up quietly with the usual salutation. He seemed paler and more spectre-like than ever, and his face scarcely lighted up into its usual smile.

As he recognised him, the veteran frowned. He too felt constrained and vexed at the schoolmaster's presence.

Just then the sound of shouting and firing again rose upon his ears. A constrained silence ensued, which was at last broken again by Master Arfoll's voice.

"Great changes are taking place, my Corporal. Here you live so far out of the world that much escapes you, and the journals are full of lies. It is certain, however, that the Emperor has abdicated."

Marcelle turned an appealing look on the speaker, as if beseeching him to be silent, for she feared some outburst on the part of the Corporal. Derval, however, was very quiet; he sat still, with lips set tight together, and

eyes fixed on the ground. At last he said grimly, fixing his hawk-like eye on Arfoll—

“Yes, there are great changes; and *you* . . . do *you* too wear the white cockade?”

Master Arfoll shook his head.

“I am no Royalist,” he replied; “I have seen too much of Kings for that. The return of the Bourbon will be the return of all the reptiles whom the Goddess of Liberty drove out of France; we shall be the sport of *parvenus* and the prey of priests; there will be peace, but it will be ignominious, and we shall still ask in vain for the Rights of Man.”

The Corporal's eye kindled, his whole look expressed astonishment. After all, then, Master Arfoll was not such a fool as had been supposed; if he could not appreciate the Emperor, he could at least despise King Louis. Without expressing surprise in any direct way, Derval said, as if wishing to change the subject—

“You have been a great stranger, Master Arfoll. It is many months since you dropped in.”

“I have been far away,” returned the itinerant, seating himself by the Corporal’s side. “You will wonder when I tell you that I have been to the great City itself.”

“To Paris!” ejaculated the Corporal, while Marcelle looked as astonished as if Master Arfoll had said that he had visited the next world.

“I have a kinsman at Meaux, and I was sent for to close his eyes; he had no other friend on earth. While I was there, the Allies marched on Paris, and I beheld all the horrors of the war. My Corporal, it was a war of devils; both sides fought like fiends, and between them both the country was laid waste. The poor peasants fled to the woods, and hid themselves in caves, and the churches were full of women and children. You could see the fires of towns and villages burning day and night. No man had any pity for his neighbour, and the French conscripts were as cruel to their own countrymen as if they themselves were Cossacks or Croats. Fields and farms, the abodes of man and beast, all were laid waste, and in the night great troops

of hungry wolves came out and fed on the dead."

"That is war," said the Corporal, nodding his head phlegmatically, for he was well used to such little incidents.

"At last, with many thousands more, I found my way into the great City, and there I remained throughout the siege. Those were days of horror! While the defenders were busy fighting, the outcasts of the earth came out of their dark dens and filled the streets, shrieking for bread; they were as thick and loathsome as vermin crawling on a corpse; and when they were denied, murder was often done. Ah, God! they were mad! I have seen a mother, maniacal with starvation, dash out her babe's brains on the pavement of the street! Well, it was soon over, and I saw the great allied armies march in. Our people cheered and embraced them as they entered—many fell upon their knees and blessed them—and some strewed flowers."

"*Canaille!*" hissed the Corporal between his teeth, which he ground together viciously.

“Poor wretches, they knew no better, and if they were wrong, God will not blame them. But all this is not what I wished to tell you ; it is something which will interest you more. I saw the Emperor—at Fontainebleau.”

“The Emperor!” repeated Derval in a low voice, not lifting his eyes. His face was very pale, and during the description of the siege he had with difficulty suppressed his agitation. For all this sorrow and desolation meant only one thing to him—his Idol was overthrown. The entry of the Allies into Paris, and their welcome by the excited populace, was only a final proof of human perfidy—of national treachery to the greatest and noblest of beings. All had fallen away from the “Little Corporal ;” all but those who, like Derval, were impotent to help him. Yet the sun still shone. Yet the heavens were still blue, the earth still green! And there—ah, God of Battles!—they were upraising the White Lily, the abominable *Fleur de lys*!

By this time Marcelle, too, was seated on the sward close to her uncle’s feet, and her eyes were raised half eagerly, half imploringly,

to Master Arfoll's face. Very beautiful indeed she looked that day, though paler and somewhat thinner than on the day, about a year before, when she had first heard Rohan Gwenfern's confession of love. She, too, was eager to hear what an eye-witness had to say of him whom she still passionately adored.

"It was a memorable day," said Master Arfoll; "the day of his adieu to the Old Guard."

He paused a moment, gazing sadly and thoughtfully out seaward, while the Corporal's heart began to beat violently as at the roll-call of drums. The very name of the Imperial Guard touched the fountain of tears deep hidden in his breast. His bronzed cheek flushed, his lips trembled. Quietly, almost unconsciously, Marcelle slipped her hand into his, and he held it softly as he listened on.

"I will tell you the truth, my Corporal. When I saw the Guard called out, I was grieved, for they were a sorry show; many were quite ragged, and others were sick and



ill. They were drawn up in a line close to the Palace, and they waited a long time before he appeared. At last he came, on horseback, with the brave Macdonald by his side, and other generals following; and at his appearance there was so great a shout it seemed bringing down the skies. He came up slowly, and dismounted; then he held up his hand; and there was dead silence. You could have heard a pin drop. He wore his old overcoat and cocked hat; I should have known him anywhere, from the pictures.”

“How did he look?” asked the Corporal. “Ill? Pale?—but there, he was always that!”

“I was very close, and I could see his face; it was quite yellow, and the cheeks hung heavily, and the eyes were leaden-coloured and sad. But when he approached the ranks he smiled, and you would have thought his face made of sunshine! I never saw such a smile before—it was god-like! I say this, though he was never god of mine. Then he began to speak, and his voice

was broken, and the tears rolled down his cheeks."

"And he said?—he said?" gasped the Corporal, his voice choked with emotion.

"What he said you have perhaps read in the journals, but words cannot convey the look, the tone. He said that France had chosen another ruler, and that he was content, since his only prayer was for France; that some day, perhaps, he would write down the story of his battles for the world to read. Then he embraced Macdonald, and called aloud for the Imperial Eagle; and when the standard was brought he kissed it a hundred times. . . . Corporal, my heart was changed at that moment, and I felt that I could have died to serve him. He is a great man! . . . A wail rose from the throats of the Guard, and every face was drowned in tears; old men wept like little children; many cast themselves upon their knees imploring him not to forsake them. The ranks broke like waves of the sea. Marshal Macdonald hid his face in his hands and almost sobbed aloud, and several generals drew their swords

and shouted like men possessed, *Vive l'Empereur!* This lasted only for a little; then it was all over. He mounted his horse, and rode slowly and silently away."

Master Arfoll added in a solemn voice—

"That night he left his palace, never to return."

Silence ensued; then suddenly Marcelle, who had been sitting spell-bound listening, uttered a wild cry, with her eyes fixed in terror on her uncle. As she did so, the Corporal, without a word or a sign, dropped his chin upon his breast, and fell forward upon his face.

"He is dead! he is dead!" cried Marcelle, as Master Arfoll raised the insensible form in his arms. And indeed the hue of death was on the Corporal's cheeks, and his features were drawn and fixed as if after the last agony. Casting herself on her knees, and chafing his hands in hers, Marcelle called upon him passionately and in despair. Many minutes elapsed, however, before there came any change. At last, he stirred, moaned

feebly, and opened his eyes. When he did so his look was vacant, and he seemed like one who talks in sleep.

"It is an epilepsy," said Master Arfoll gently ; "we must try to get him home."

"Who's there?" murmured the old man, speaking articulately for the first time. "Is it thou, Jacques?" Then he muttered as if to himself, "It is the Emperor's orders — to-morrow we march."

Gradually, however, recognition came back, and he attempted in vain to struggle up to his feet. Looking round him wildly, he saw Marcelle's face full of tender solicitude.

"Is it thou, Marcelle?" he asked. "What is wrong?"

"Nothing is wrong," she answered, "but you have not been well. Ah God, but you are better now. Master Arfoll, help him to rise."

With some difficulty the Corporal was assisted to his feet ; even then he would have staggered and fallen but for Master Arfoll's help. Dazed and confused, he was led slowly down the hill towards his own

house, which was fortunately not far away. As he went, the sound of firing and cheering again rose on his ear. He drew himself up suddenly and listened.

“What’s that?” he said sharply.

“It is nothing,” answered Arfoll.

“It is the enemy beginning the attack,” said the Corporal in a low voice. “Hark again!”

“Uncle! uncle!” cried Marcelle.

“His thoughts are far away,” observed Master Arfoll, “and perhaps it is better so.”

They walked on without interruption till they reached the cottage; entering which, they placed the Corporal in the great wooden arm-chair, where he sat like one in a dream. While the widow brought vinegar to wet his hands and forehead, Marcelle turned eagerly to Arfoll, and sought his advice as to the course next to be taken.

“If something is not done soon, he will surely die.”

“There is but one way,” said the school-master; “he must be bled at once.”

Ten minutes later Plouët, the village barber,

who added to his other avocations that of village surgeon and leech, came briskly up the street with lance and basin, and having procured clean linen from the widow, proceeded dexterously to open a vein. Plouët, a little weazel-like man of fifty, was an old crony of the Corporal, and attended to the case *con amore*.

“ I have said always,” he explained, as the blood was flowing gently into his basin, “that the Corporal was too full-blooded; besides, he is a man of passion, look you, and passion is dangerous, for it mounts to the brain. But see, he stirs already.” . . . And, indeed, before an ounce of the vital stream had been taken away, the Corporal drew a great breath, and looked around him with quite a different expression, recognizing everybody and understanding the situation. With the assistance of Plouët, he was got to bed; and when there he soon sank into a heavy slumber.

“ Let him not be disturbed,” said the phlebotomist, as he washed his hands. “ The sounder he sleeps the better, and I will look round and see him in the morning.”

\*                    \*                    \*                    \*                    \*

“His heart is broken!” cried Marcelle, weeping on her mother’s bosom. “He will die!”

“He thinks too much of the Emperor,” said Gildas, “but the Emperor would not fret for *him*, let me tell you. Emperor or King, it is one to me; but I knew it was all up when he lost Marshal Ney.”

They were alone in the kitchen, talking in whispers. Night had come, and beyond the village were burning large bonfires, the signals for general rejoicing. They had no lamp, for the Corporal lay in the *lit clos* in the corner, and they were afraid of dazzling his eyes and disturbing his rest. Ever and anon they heard the sound of footsteps hastening up or down the street, sometimes accompanied with shouting and singing; and it was clear that the village was full of excitement.

“They are keeping it up,” said Gildas; and, after fidgeting uneasily for some time, he took his hat and sauntered forth. He knew one or two choice spirits who might

be disposed to be convivial, and he had no objection to join them.

An hour passed on. The sounds continued, but still the Corporal slept peacefully. At last Marcelle rose with a weary sigh.

"I cannot rest," she said. "You will not want me, mother, and I will go and see what they are doing."

So saying, after one last loving look at her uncle, to see that he was quite at rest, she drew her cloak round her, and, softly opening the door, slipped out into the night.







## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE HERO OF THE HOUR.

**T**HE Chapel was illuminated; all along the hill-sides bonfires were burning, and at the mast-heads of many of the fishing boats in the bay swung coloured lamps. The *cabaret* was crammed full of those thirsty souls who find in any public event, glad or sad, an excuse for moistening their throats and muddling their brains. The white flag still waved on the Chapel, and the crimson rays issuing from the windows lit up its golden *fleur de lys*.

The street was quite deserted as Marcelle stepped forth. The night wind blew coldly, and a fresh scent swept in from the sea.

For some minutes she stood outside the door, gazing out towards the dark ocean ; then, with a soft sigh, she walked up the street. Her heart was very heavy that night, for all things seemed against her. The great good Emperor had fallen from his throne, and fickle men, forgetful of all his greatness, were already proclaiming a new King ; while here at Kromlaix, on her own hearth, the shadow of doom had also fallen, and her uncle had been stricken down. God seemed against her and her house ! It was like the Day of Judgment ; only the wicked were not being judged, and the good were being punished instead of the bad.

Curiosity drew her towards the Chapel, in the neighbourhood of which there seemed most noise and bustle. As she approached she found straggling groups of men and women upon the road, but it was too dark for any one to recognize her. Most were talking and laughing merrily, and from time to time she heard cries of "*Vive le Roi !*" Each cry went through her heart like the stab of a knife. She had never felt so

deserted and forlorn. Ever since she could remember well, the Emperor had been as the sun in heaven, gradually arising higher and higher until he reached the Imperial zenith ; and though his glory had been far away, some of it had always reached her Uncle's house, with a sort of reflected splendour which grew with years. Ever since she could remember, her Uncle had been an authority in the place, honoured as well as feared ; though a poor man, he had seemed "clothed on" with a glory surpassing riches. And now all was changed. The sun had set in blood, and night had come indeed ; and the old veteran, forlornly clinging to an old faith, was ignominiously and miserably cast down.

If she had only been born a man-child, as Uncle Ewen often said she should have been ! If, as it was, she could only do something, however little, to help the good Emperor, and to heal her Uncle's heart ! Ah, God ! that she had a man's hand to tear that white abomination down ! . . . She could dimly see the flag lying against the dark blue

heaven, and her heart heaved with a fierce passion inherited from her father.

Creeping along from group to group, she came to the graveyard of the Chapel, and to her astonishment found it filled with an excited crowd. Great streams of light flowed from the Chapel windows, but many men held torches, which threw a lurid glare on the upturned faces. Something particular was taking place, and some one was addressing the people in a loud voice. As she stood at the gate Marcelle beheld, standing on a high green mound in the centre of the crowd, a group of men, chief of whom was the Sieur Marmont.

Marmont was the speaker, and his face flashed wildly in the light of the torches. Some gentlemen surrounding him, who looked like officers, had drawn their swords, and were waving them in the air, applauding his words; and among them were several Priests.

In the eyes of Marcelle this Marmont seemed a wretch unfit to live; for she remembered his terrible rencontre with her

Uncle, and his wicked seditious words. As for the Priests, surely God had cast them out, and filled them with a devilish ingratitude, otherwise they would remember how good the Emperor had been to them, and how he had called them back to France, like the holy man he was, when the atheists would have banished them for ever.

Entering the graveyard, and advancing nearer, she saw standing near to Marmont, but on the lower ground, so that his head only reached to the other's outstretched hands, the figure of a man. His back was turned to Marcelle, and he was looking up at the speaker.

"Listen, then!" she heard Marmont saying in a ringing voice. "Listen, all you who fear God and love the King; and if there be one among you who blames the man, let him stand forward and give me the lie. I say the man was justified. He refused to draw sword for the Usurper: for this alone he was hunted down, even as the wolves of the woods are hunted; and if in the despair of his heart he shed blood, I say he was again

justified. Look at the man! God above, who sees all things, could tell you what he has suffered, since God only has preserved him as a testimony and a sign against the dynasty which has fallen for ever. Look at him—his famished cheeks, his wasted form, his eyes still wild with hunger and despair. You tell me he has slain a man; I tell you the Emperor who made him what he is has slain thousands upon thousands. You tell me he is a deserter and a revolter; I tell you that he is a hero and a martyr.” He added with an eager cry; “Embrace him, my brothers!”

The figure so referred to did not stir; and could Marcelle have seen the expression of his face, she would have noticed only a strange and vacant indifference. But suddenly, with a common impulse, the crowd began to cheer, hysterical women began to sob, and the man was surrounded by a surging mass of living beings, all stretching out arms to reach him. As if to avoid their touch, he stepped up on the mound beside Marmont, and turned his face towards Marcelle.

“Rohan Gwenfern! Rohan Gwenfern!” they cried.

It was Rohan, little less wretched and ragged than when Marcelle last beheld him on the night of the flood. He gazed out on the crowd like one in a dream; and when the Sieur Marmont and the priests flocked around him and grasped his hands, he did not seem to respond to their enthusiasm. Perhaps he estimated that enthusiasm at its worth, and knew that Marmont and his friends were only too glad to avail themselves of any circumstance which would cast discredit on the fallen Empire. Perhaps he knew also that the crowd was merely yielding to an excited impulse, and would have been as ready to tear him to pieces if Marmont's speech had pointed in that direction.

He did not utter a word, but, after gazing down in silence, he descended the mound, and made his way straight to the spot where Marcelle stood. The crowd parted to make way for him, but continued to cheer and call his name. Almost immediately he was face

to face with Marcelle, and his eyes were fixed on hers.

“Come, Marcelle!” he said quietly, with no other word of greeting, and exhibiting no surprise at her presence. Stretching out his hand he took hers.

Seeing this, and recognizing Marcelle, several began to groan.

“It is the Corporal’s niece! *A bas le Caporal!*”

“Silence!” cried the voice of the Sieur Marmont. “Let the man depart in peace.”

Trembling and stupefied Marcelle suffered herself to be led out of the churchyard. The apparition of Rohan, under those circumstances, had been painful beyond measure; for, although her first impulse had been one of joy at seeing him alive and strong, she had almost immediately shrunk shuddering away. In the lurid light of that scene she beheld, not the playmate of her childhood and the lover of her youth, but the murderer of Pipriac and the enemy of the Emperor. Honoured by those who hated her idol, welcomed and applauded by those who had



broken her uncle's heart, he could not have come back under circumstances less auspicious and sympathetic. Despite all that he had suffered, her heart hardened against him. She almost forgot for the moment that she had loved him, and that she owed him her life, in the horror of seeing him again in the ranks of the abominable.

Nevertheless, in a sort of stupor, she walked on by his side down the dark road, until they were quite alone. He did not say a word, and the silence at last became so painful to her that she trembled through and through. Then she drew away her hand, and he did not attempt to detain it. It was not often that Marcelle felt hysterical—she was woven of too soldier-like a stuff, but she certainly did so on the present occasion. Her feelings had been strung up so terribly before the meeting, that they threatened now to overcome her.

It was a dim starlight night, and she could just see the glimmer of her companion's face. At last, when the silence had become unbearable, he broke it suddenly with a laugh, so

wild and unearthly that it made her frightened heart leap within her ; a laugh with no joy in it, but full of an unnatural excitement. Then, turning his eyes upon her, and putting his hand upon her arm, he said in a hoarse voice—

“ Well, it is all over, and I have come home. But where is *your* welcome, Marcelle ? ”

His voice sounded so strangely that she looked at him in terror ; then, clinging to his arm and yielding to the tremor of her heart, she cried wildly—

“ O, Rohan, Rohan, do not think I am not glad ! We scarcely thought to see you alive again, and I have prayed for you every night as if your soul was with God, and I have sat with your mother and talked about you when all the others thought I was asleep. But all is changed, and the Emperor is taken prisoner, and Uncle Ewen’s heart is broken, and we are all miserable, miserable, and all this night I have prayed to die, to die ! ”

Entirely losing her self-command, she hid her face upon his arm and sobbed aloud. Strange to say, Rohan showed no agitation

whatever, but watched her quietly till the storm of her pain was over, when he said in the same peculiar tones—

“Why do you weep, Marcelle? Because the Emperor is hunted down?”

She did not answer, but sobbed on. With the sharp, fierce laugh that had startled her before, Rohan continued—

“When I found that Christ would not help me, I went to Notre Dame de la Haine, and for a long time I thought she was deaf too. But I prayed, and my prayers have come to pass—she heard me!—within a year, within a year!”

Recalled to herself either by the violence of his tones or the strangeness of his words, Marcelle drew back and looked aghast in the speaker's face, which seemed wild and excited in the dim light.

“Almighty God!” she murmured, “what are you saying, Rohan?”

Rohan continued in a lower voice, as if talking to himself—

“I did not expect it so soon, but I knew it must come at last; old Pipriac told me

that in a dream. It has been a long chase, but at last we have hunted him down, and now Our Lady of Hate will gnaw his heart, and I . . . I shall go home and rest, for I am tired."

"Rohan!"

"Yes, Marcelle."

"Why do you talk like that? Why are you so strange?"

He bent down his head and looked at her quietly.

"Am I strange?" he said.

"Yes; and I am afraid of you when you wander so."

Rohan drew his hand across his forehead, and knitted his brows.

"I believe you are right, Marcelle," he said, slowly, and with a very different manner. "Sometimes I think that I am not in my right mind. I have had great troubles to bear, and I have had so long to wait that no wonder I am wearied out. Do not be angry with me; I shall be well soon."

Something in his tone awoke the tears within her again, but she conquered herself,

and took his hand. By this time they had reached the main street of the village and were not far from her uncle's door. Rohan, however, seemed almost unconscious where he was, so wearily was he following his own thoughts.

"There is sickness in the house, or I would ask you in. Oh, Rohan, Uncle Ewen is very ill, and I fear that he will die. He is heart-broken because the Emperor is cast down."

Rohan echoed, in a hollow voice—

"Because the Emperor is cast down?"

"I know you do not love the Emperor, because you think he has made you suffer; but you are wrong—he could not know everything, and he would pity you if he really knew . . . Rohan, once more, do not think I am not glad! . . . You are safe now."

"Yes; they say so," answered Rohan.

"Your mother will be full of joy—it is a happy night for *her*. Good-bye, good-bye!"

She stretched out both her hands and he took them in his; then he quietly drew her to his breast, and kissed her gently on the brow.

“You are prettier than ever, Marcelle!”

He could feel the heaving of her gentle bosom, the trembling of her warm form; he drew her closer, and she looked up into his face.

“Rohan, do you ever pray?”

He smiled strangely.

“Sometimes. Why do you ask?”

Her voice trembled as she replied, softly releasing herself from his embrace—

“Pray for Uncle Ewen—that the good God may make him well!”

Then they parted, Marcelle entering the cottage, and Rohan moving slowly away in the direction of his own home.





## CHAPTER XV.

### BREATHING-SPACE.

**R**OHAN Gwenfern was right—he was quite safe at last, and had no cause for fear; on the contrary, his wild story, spreading over the province, raised him up many friends and sympathisers. Even those who had been bitterest against him dared not say a word. The Mayor of St. Gurlott, who had been among the fiercest of his persecutors, openly proclaimed that he was a martyr, and that something ought to be done for him by his countrymen: a change of opinion which becomes intelligible when we observe that the Mayor, like so many others of his chame-

leonic species, had changed from tricoloured to dazzling white directly Bonaparte's cause became utterly hopeless. As for Pipriac's death, it was simply "justifiable homicide;" the savage old "burn-powder" had only met with his deserts.

So Rohan sat again by his own hearth, a free man, and his mother's eyes brightened with joy because God had restored to her the child of her womb. Her happiness, however, was destined to be of brief duration. She soon perceived that Rohan was fearfully and wonderfully changed. His frame was bent and weakened, his face had lost its old look of brightness and health, his eyes were dim, and, alas! his hair had in parts grown quite grey. But this was not all. The physical change was nothing compared to the moral and mental transformation. It was quite obvious that his intellect was to a certain degree affected by what he had undergone. He was subject to strange trances, when reason absolutely fled and his speech became positively maniacal; and on coming out of these—they were fortunately.



very brief, often merely momentary—he was like a man who emerges from the shadow of the grave. At night his sleep was troubled with frightful dreams, and his soul was constantly travelling back to the time of the siege in the Cave and of Pipriac's death. No smile lit his once happy face. He drooped and sickened, and would sit whole days looking into the fire.

During the long winter he had remained in hiding among the lonely huts of St. Lok, the inhabitants of which were systematic wreckers, but he was not betrayed. His brain, however, was kept in a constant state of tension, as he was liable to capture at any moment, and he had undergone great privations. But the circumstance which had left most mark upon him was Pipriac's death; the rest he might have forgotten, but this he could not shake away;—for he was conscience-stricken. The world might justify him, but he could not justify himself. To have blood upon his hands was terrible, and the blood of his father's friend! Better to have died!

The whole burthen of events was too much for his delicate organisation. He was overshadowed with darkness as of a dead and a living world, and the peace of his life was poisoned for ever. Mental horror and physical pain combined had stupefied him. He seemed still paralyzed with the terror and the despair of those ghastly nights in the Cave.

He saw too, but dimly as in a dream, that a moral shadow had arisen between his soul and that of Marcelle. His salvation had been her sorrow. His hope was her despair. What had lifted him up again into the light of day had stricken down her Uncle as into the darkness of the grave. She was still the same to him when they met—gentle, honest, truthful, and kind ; but her looks were without passion, her manners shrinking and subdued. She seemed of another religion, of a sadder, intenser faith. He had still a portion of her heart, but the shadow of Bonaparte had estranged her soul.

During these days, indeed, Marcelle seemed wholly wrapped up in her Uncle.

Uncle Ewen came out of his illness bravely, only keeping his bed a few days, for he could not bear to lie there like a useless log ; but ever after that he was only the ghost of his old self—a shattered man, liable to frequent attacks of the same complaint, sometimes violent, but generally having merely the character of what French physicians term the *petit mal*. Excitement of any kind now shook him to pieces, and the household carefully endeavoured to conceal from him any news which was likely to cause agitation. They could not, however, keep him from examining the journals—from following in his mind's eye the journey of Bonaparte from France and his arrival on the island of Elba, the pageant of the King's entry into the capital of France, the changes which were everywhere announcing the arrival of the old *régime*. Indeed, the Corporal had only to stand at his own door looking forth, in order to see that the spirit of things was marvelously transformed. The Chapel bells were ever ringing, religious processions were ever passing, solemn ceremonies were ever being

performed ; for the King was a holy King, and his family were a holy family, and Heaven could not be sufficiently propitiated for having overthrown the Usurper.

“ The locusts are overrunning the land ! ” said Master Arfoll ; and the Corporal—who was beginning to think Master Arfoll a good fellow—nodded approval of the metaphor.

By the “ locusts,” Master Arfoll meant the priests. Where during the Emperor’s time the eye had fallen upon a military coat, it now fell upon a *soutane*. All the swarms who had left France with the *emigrés* came buzzing back, and it became a question how to fill their mouths. The air rang with the names of a thousand Saints—there was one for every day in the week, and several for Sunday. “ Te Deums ” were said from morning to night. Brittany recovered its old sacred glory—chapels were repaired, forgotten shrines remembered and redecorated, Calvaries rebuilt, graven images of the Virgin and the Saints erected at every corner. Every old religious ceremonial that had fallen into disuse since the Revolution

came once more into observance. It was astonishing how rapidly the dead ideas and customs sprang up again: like flowers—or fungi—rising up in a night.

All these things brought no joy to the Corporal's household. The widow, who was nothing if not religious, of course took part in most of the ceremonials, but her conduct had no political meaning. She had adored God and the Saints under Napoleon, and she adored them under King Louis. She had a new source of uneasiness in the continued absence of her son Hoël, who had made few signs for several months, and who ought long ago to have returned home.

Since the changes that had taken place Marcelle disliked the Chapel where Father Rolland officiated, and went thither as seldom as possible. She could not forgive the little *curé* for being friendly with the Sieur Marmont and the other Royalists; for, although she knew he had no strong opinions of his own, she felt that he was certainly no friend to the Emperor. Instead of hearing public mass, she got into the habit of paying

quiet visits to Notre Dame de la Garde, the little lonely chapel on the summit of the cliffs. Here she could pray in peace, for the place was seldom visited by any other living creature.

Summer came, and the White Lily was golden indeed, shaking its glory over France, and filling all hearts with the hope of prosperity and peace. The great sea-wall of Brittany was white with happy birds, and in the green slopes above the grass grew and the furze shone with yellow stars; while inland, across the valleys, the wheat waved, and among the wheat burnt the poppies like "clear bright bubbles of blood;" and on the great marshes the salt crystals lay and sparkled in the sun, and the rivers sank low among the reeds, dwindling often to silver threads. It was a glorious summer, and the world was turned into a garden. People forgot all their troubles in the rapture of living and the certainty of a good harvest; only the soldiers grumbled, for their trade seemed done.

One bright day Marcelle, as she issued

from the little chapel, saw Rohan standing close by as if waiting for her to appear. She approached him with her old bright smile, and lifted up her face for his salute. He looked very pale and sad, but his face was quite calm and his manner gentle in the extreme.

After a few words of greeting, they walked along side by side close to the edge of the cliffs—following the very path which they trod together little more than a year before. Far below them they saw the waters crawling, with a cream-white edge of foam; and the colours of the bottom, golden with sand, or red with rock and weed, or black with mud, were clearly visible through the transparent shallows of the crystal sea. At last Marcelle paused, for they were walking away from the village.

“I must go home,” she said; “I promised not to stay.”

Rohan turned too, and they walked slowly back towards the chapel. No word of love was spoken between them, but presently Rohan said, pointing out seaward—

"I often wonder what he is doing and thinking—*now*."

She looked at him in surprise.

"*He?* of whom do you speak?"

"Of the Emperor. They have put him on one side, and he is far away from all help or hope. They call him King of Elba, but that is only in jest, I suppose—for all his power is gone for ever."

As Rohan spoke, his eyes were fixed as if in a trance, and his face grew strangely agitated. Marcelle, alarmed, walked on more rapidly, while he continued—

"After all, Master Arfoll was wrong when he said that the Emperor was only flesh and blood like ourselves. Sometimes I have thought he is a spirit, a shadow like the shadow of God; for it is hard to think of a man having all that upon his soul! Thousands upon thousands of dead gathering round his pillow every night, and crying out his name. No man's heart could bear it without breaking."

Marcelle did not quite catch the drift of the words, but she knew that they referred to



him she deemed immaculate, and her heart heaved in anger; but when she looked into her companion's face, which was blanched and worn as if the light of reason had flown, her thoughts were all pity and pain. So she said gently, to change the subject—

“Uncle Ewen often asks for you—he thinks it unkind that you do not come to the house.”

Without replying, Rohan gave that strange low laugh which she had first noticed and feared on the night when they had met in the churchyard. As she heard it, she remembered with a thrill a cruel whisper that was already going about the village, to the effect that Rohan Gwenfern was no longer in his right senses, and that at certain times he was dangerously violent.

Passing the Chapel, and descending the grassy slopes, they soon reached the village. To Marcelle's astonishment Rohan remained with her until they were close to her Uncle's cottage, and when she paused and put out her hand to say good-bye, he quietly said—  
“I shall go in with you to see Uncle Ewen.”

She started, for she had not exactly expected this, and when she had introduced her Uncle's name, it was merely with a view to distract Rohan's wandering attention. In her secret heart she had a dread of a meeting between the two men, lest by a stray word, a passing opinion, they might come again into open opposition. Thus pressed, however, she could hardly make an objection; so she merely said, with a pleading look—

“Promise me, first, not to speak of the Emperor.”

Rohan, who now seemed quite calm and collected, promised without hesitation, and in another minute they crossed the threshold of the cottage. They found the Corporal sitting in his arm-chair alone by the fireside, busily reading, with the aid of his spectacles, an old newspaper.

Marcelle tripped first into the chamber, and, leaning over her Uncle's chair, said, smiling—

“I have brought you a visitor, Uncle Ewen! See!”

The Corporal looked and saw Rohan

standing before him, so worn, so grey, so strange and old, that he scarcely knew him. He rubbed his eyes, then blinked them in amaze. When recognition came he exclaimed, rising from his chair—

“Is it thou, *mon garz*? Soul of a crow! how thou art changed! I did not know thee!”

“Yes, Uncle Ewen, it is I!” said Rohan calmly; and the two men shook hands, with considerable emotion on the part of the Corporal.

“I will tell thee this, Marcelle—he is brave—he has the heart of a lion, but there is something wrong *here*!”

The Corporal as he spoke tapped his forehead significantly. It was some weeks after that little reconciliation, and Rohan had since been a frequent visitor to his uncle's house. Strange to say, he and his uncle got on singularly well together, and even when the name of Bonaparte came up they had no disputes. The Corporal was not so dogmatic as he used to be, while Rohan on his

part was very reticent ; so they promised to be excellent friends.

The Corporal proceeded :

“ We might have guessed it when he first refused to take up arms. Master Arfoll is cracked, look you, and Rohan has caught it of him—it is as bad as the fever. Well, I freely forgive him all, for he is not at present in his right mind.”

Of course, the Corporal, an undoubted monomaniac himself, had the most implicit belief possible in his own personal sanity.





## CHAPTER XVI.

### RESURGAM!

**S**O the summer passed, and once again the sun moved on to the equinox. France was at rest, lulled into a drowsy doze by the sounds of hymns and prayers. Sceptics shook their heads; revolutionists burrowed like moles, and threw up little mounds of conspiracy; the Imperial Guard frowned with "red brows of storm;" but the new dynasty lay comfortably on its padded pillow, amid a little rosy cloud of incense, counting its beads. As for the prisoned Lion, he made no sign. Restlessly and fretfully he was pacing up and down his narrow cage. One heard from time to time of his doings—his mimicry in

miniature of his old glory, his old ambition ; but the Kings of Europe only nodded merrily at one another—he was safely caught, and there, on his island, might roar himself hoarse.

As the months rolled on, Corporal Derval resigned himself to the situation, and began to speak of the Emperor with a solemn sorrow, as of some dead Saint who could never rise again. Falling into this humour, instead of crossing it, Rohan Gwenfern greatly rose in the estimation of the Corporal. "He is a brave man," Uncle Ewen would say, "and the more brave because he knows how to respect a losing cause! I did him wrong!"

And gradually, under the softening influences which now surrounded him, Rohan brightened into something dimly resembling his old self. His cheeks were still sunken, his hair still sown with grey, but his frame recovered much of its former vigour. He began again to wander about the crags and upon the shore, and in these rambles Marcelle often accompanied him—as when they were

younger and happier. The Corporal approved, saying to the widow: "He saved her life, and it is his, little woman. Why should they not wed?" And Mother Derval, whose heart was burthened with the new loss of her son Hoël, who never returned from the war, saw no reason to dissent. If the truth were told, the poor woman was going more and more over to the enemy. In her secret heart she believed not only in the Pope, and the Saints, and the Bishops, but in the King. Bonaparte had taken her children, and the priest told her he was a Monster; so she prayed God that he would never rule France more.

Only Marcelle Derval, perhaps, besides the mother who bore him, knew how it really stood with Rohan Gwenfern. The shock of those terrible days had struck at the very roots of his life, and the bloom of his spiritual nature was taken off for ever. Time might heal him more and more, but the process would be very sad and slow. His nervous system was deeply shaken, and his reason still trembled and tottered at times.

Although he showed by countless signs that he loved his cousin tenderly and deeply, his affection for her seldom now rose into actual passion, such as had carried him away when he made his first half-involuntary confession. There was something almost brotherly sometimes in his manner and in his tone. Yet once or twice he caught her to his breast and wildly kissed her, in a rush of feeling that changed him for the moment into a happy man.

"She will never marry Gwenfern," said gossips at the Fountain; "for he is mad."

They little knew the nature of Marcelle. The very shadow which lay at times upon Rohan's mind made her more eager to fulfil her plight. Moreover, she had strong passions, though these had been lulled to sleep by solemn thoughts and fears; and the strongest passion in her soul was her love for her cousin.

Mikel Grallon now seldom crossed her path; he knew better than to provoke the wrath of the man he had persecuted. A zealous adherent of the new *régime*, he care-



fully avoided the Corporal's house, and cast his eyes elsewhere in search of a fitting help-mate.

When winter came in good earnest there was many a quiet gathering by the Corporal's fireside. Uncle Ewen, whom ill-health confined a good deal within doors, presided, and now and then told his memorable story of Cismone, while Gildas was eloquent about the exploits of Marshal Ney. Rohan, who was constantly present, coldly held his tongue when the name of Bonaparte came up, but the widow would quietly cross herself in the corner. After all, Uncle Ewen seemed only talking of a dead man; of one whose very existence had faded into a dream; who was calendared, for the Corporal and for Marcelle, among the other departed Saints.

One day, when the snow was on the ground, and all was peaceful and white and still, Rohan said to Marcelle:

“Do you remember what you told me, long ago, that morning when I carried you out of the Cathedral of St. Gildas? That you loved me, and that you would marry me.”

“ I remember.”

“ And will you keep your word ?”

She hesitated for a moment ; then looking at him quietly with her grey truthful eyes, she answered—

“ Yes, Rohan—if Uncle Ewen is willing.”

They were standing down by the Fountain, looking at the sea. As Marcelle replied, her heart was touched with pity more than love ; for her lover’s face wore a sad far-away look full of strange suggestions of past suffering. After a space he said again—

“ I am changed, Marcelle, and I think I shall never be quite myself. Think again ! There are many others who would love you well.”

She put her hand gently in his.

“ But I love you, Rohan,” she replied.

That very day they told the Corporal, and he cheerfully gave them his blessing. Father Rolland was spoken to by the widow, and readily undertook to procure the assent of the Bishop, which was necessary to complete a marriage between cousins. When the affair was bruited about the village many shook

their heads—Mikel Grallon particularly. “The Bishop should interfere,” said honest Mikel; “for, look you, the man is dangerous.”

The Bishop, however, made no obstacle, and it was arranged that the marriage should take place in the spring.

Early in March, 1815, Rohan Gwenfern entered the cottage and found Marcelle alone in the kitchen. She was dressed in a white gown, and was busy at some household work. As he entered, she walked up to him confidently and held up her lips to receive his kiss.

“Spring is come indeed,” he said, looking quite radiant. “Look, Marcelle, I have brought this for a sign.”

In Brittany they measure the seasons by flowers and birds and other natural signs, as much as by Saints’ days and holidays; and it had been arranged that these two should be married in spring, when “the violet came.” Marcelle blushed deep crimson, but took the flower gently and put it in her

breast. Then, as Rohan folded his arms around her, she leant her head upon his shoulder, and looked up, radiant, into his face.

Suddenly, as they stood there full of happiness, the door was dashed open, and Uncle Ewen tottered in, reeling like a drunken man. He held a newspaper in his hand and his face was white as death.

“Marcelle! Rohan!” he gasped. “Here is news.”

“What is the matter?” cried Marcelle, releasing herself from Rohan’s arms.

Uncle Ewen waved the newspaper ecstatically round his head.

“*A bas les Bourbons!*” he cried, with something of his old vigour. “On the 1st of March the Emperor landed at Cannes, and he is now marching on Paris. VIVE L’EMPEREUR!”

As the Corporal spoke the words, Rohan threw his arms up into the air, and shrieked like a man shot through the heart!



## CHAPTER XVII.

“IBI OMNIS EFFUSUS LABOR!”

**T**HE news of the Emperor's escape was, as all the world knows, only too true. After months of cunning preparation, during which he had affected all the virtues of a Cincinnatus harmlessly contemplating his own acres, Bonaparte had at last slipped out of his cage (the captors had taken care to leave the door very wide open), and was again on French soil at the head of a thousand men. To use the expressive language of the French pulpit, “The Devil had again broken loose.” White-stoled priests might thunder from a thousand shrines, but what did Satanus care?

On Rohan Gwenfern the news came like a thunderbolt, and literally smote him down. As a man scorched by lightning, but still breathing, gazes panting at the black wrack whence the fiery levin has fallen, he lay in horror looking upward. To him this resurrection of the Execrable meant outlawry, misery, despair, and death. What was God doing that He suffered such a thing to be? With the passing away of the Imperial pest, quiet and rest had come to France, bringing a space of holy calm, when men might breathe in peace; and to Rohan, among others, the calm had looked as if it might last for ever. Slowly and quietly the man's tortured mind had composed itself, until the dark marks of suffering were obscured if not obliterated; every happy day seemed furthering the cure of that spiritual disease to which the man was a martyr; and at last he had had courage enough to reach out his hands to touch once more the sacramental cup of love. At that very moment, when God seemed to be making atonement to him for his long and weary pains, Heaven was

obscured again, and the cruel bolt struck him down.

While Europe was shaken as by earthquake, while Thrones tottered again, and Kings looked aghast at one another, Rohan trembled like a dead leaf ready to fall. He was instantly transformed; before the sun could set again upon his horror, he seemed to have grown very old.

Our Lady of Hate had answered his prayer indeed, but in how mocking a measure. She had struck the Avatar down, only to uplift him again to his old seat. "Within a year!" It seemed as if she had given the world a brief glimpse of rest, only that its torture might be more terrible when the clouds closed again.

At first, indeed, there was little hope. The priests thundered and prayed, the Royalists swaggered and shrugged their shoulders, as much as to say, "This little business will soon be settled!" But every bulletin brought fresh confirmation of the true state of affairs. Bonaparte had not only risen again, but the waves of the old Storm were rising with him.

On one figure Rohan gazed with horror as great as filled him when he thought of the Emperor. This was the figure of Corporal Derval. It seemed as if the news of the uprising had filled the Corporal with new life. Colossus-like, he again bestrode his own hearth; assumed the Imperial pose; cocked his hat jauntily; looked the world in the face. His cheeks were alike sunken and yellow, his eyes dim, but this only made more prominent the fiery and natural redness of nose and brows. He was weak upon his legs, but his right arm performed the old sweep when he took snuff, *à l'Empereur*. No looking down *now*, as he hied down to little Plouët's to read the journals. His Master had arisen, and he himself had arisen. Oh to march at the double, and to join the little Corporal on the open field!

As the smallest village pond becomes during the storms and rains of the equinox, a miniature of the Ocean—overflows its banks, breaks into strong waves, darkens, brightens, trembles to its depth, even so did the Corporal's breast reflect in miniature the Storm



which was just seen sweeping over France. A very poor affair indeed might *his* commotion seem in the eye of the great political leaders of the hour, just as *their* commotion, in their eyes oceanic, might seem a mere pond-business from the point of view of God or a philosopher. The microcosm, however, potentially includes the macrocosm; and the spirit of Bonaparte was only the spirit of Corporal Derval indefinitely magnified.

Kromlaix was Royalist still, and indeed it had been so from time immemorial. The movements of the Corporal were regarded with no sympathy and little favour. There was a general disposition to knock the old fellow on the head—a deed which would have been done, if he had not reserved his more violent ebullitions of enthusiasm for his own fireside. Here, legs astride, snuff-box in hand, he thundered at Gildas, who wanted the Emperor to win, but thought his case hopeless, owing to the fact that Marshal Ney was for the King! But when the great news came that Ney had gone over with his whole army, and had flung himself into the arms of

his old master, uncle and nephew embraced with tears, avowing that the Imperial cause was as good as won!

Coming and going like a shadow, Rohan listened for a word, a whisper, to show him that there was still a chance. But every day darkened his hopes. Wherever the feet of Bonaparte fell, armies seemed to spring up from the solid earth; and from vale to vale ran the sound of his voice, summoning up a hidden harvest of swords.

In this time of terrible epidemic the contagion spread even to Marcelle; and this was the hardest of all to bear. A new fire burnt in her eyes, a new flush dwelt upon her cheek. When the old man delivered his joyful harangues she listened eagerly to every word, and her whole nature seemed transformed. Rohan watched her in terror, dreading to meet her eyes. Had she then forgotten all the horror and suffering through which he had passed, and did she forget that this thing which caused her such joy was his own signal of doom? . . . .

. . . Out there among the silent crags, Rohan

Gwenfern waited and listened. He did not wholly despair yet, though day by day the woeful news had been carried to his ear. He could not rest at home, nor at the fireside where the Corporal declaimed ; his only place of peace was in the heart of the earth which sheltered him before in the period of his peril. Since the tidings of the collusion between Ney and Bonaparte, he had scarcely spoken to Marcelle, but had avoided her in a weary dread. As yet no attempt had been made to lay a finger upon him, or to remind him of his old revolt against the Emperor ; men indeed were as yet too busy watching the progress of the great game in which Bonaparte was again trying to outwit his adversaries. But the call might come at any moment, as he knew. So he wandered on the shore, shivering, expectant, and afraid.

One day a wild impulse seized him to revisit the scenes of his old struggle. It was calm and sunny weather, and entering the great Cathedral, he found it alive with legions of birds, who had flocked back from the south to build their nests and rear their

young. He climbed up to the *Trou*, still full of the traces of his old struggle, and thence, through the dark winding passages, to the aërial chamber in the face of the crag. Gazing out through the window of the Cave, he saw again the calm Ocean crawling far beneath him, softly stained with red reefs and shallows of yellow sands; the fishing-boats were becalmed far out on the glassy mirror, and the sun was shining in the heavens, like the smile of God. He saw the gentle scene, and thought of *him*—of that red Shadow who was again rising on the peaceful world; and he wondered if God would suffer him still to be. As he stood, a frightful thought passed through his brain, and his face was convulsed. He thought of Pipriac, and how he struck him cruelly down. Oh, to strike that other down, to crush and kill *him* underneath the rock of his mortal hate!

Later on in the day, he crawled down the dark passages which led to the gigantic Water-cave, and ere long he was hanging over the deep green pools, which showed no traces now of that terrible flood which trans-

formed the Cave into a boiling cauldron. All was still and peaceful, full of the pulsations of the neighbouring sea, and a great grey seal swam slowly out towards the narrow passage of exit known as "Hell's Mouth." He passed along the narrow shelf communicating with the top of the Cave, and, leaping down upon the shingle, faced the black mouth of the Aqueduct. Here the storm had left its ravages indeed. The shingle was strewn with great fragments of earth and stone, and the rock all round was blackened and torn as by tooth and claw, with the fury of the flood.

Advancing a little distance into the passage, he soon found further progress impossible, for the passage was choked now by all sorts of *débris*, which it would take many years to wash away. Retracing his steps, he stumbled over a dark mass lying upon the slippery floor. It was the Statue of black marble which he discovered formerly in the inner chamber of the Aqueduct.

Washed from its pedestal by the unexampled fury of the waves, and driven like a straw downward by the force of the

torrents, it had at last paused here, wedged in between the narrow walls. Black and silent it lay, still green and slimy with the moisture of centuries, still hideous and deformed. *Ave Cæsar Imperator!* As he fell in whose likeness thou wast fashioned, so didst thou too fall at last! Sooner or later the great waters would have thee, would tear thee from thy place, and wash thee away towards the great sea. Even so they destroy Man and all his works. Sooner or later all shall vanish, like footprints on the shore of that Ocean of Eternity where wander for ever shadows that seem to live!

As Rohan bent over the cast-down Image, did he think for a moment of that other Image whom men were endeavouring to uplift to its old Imperial pedestal? Did he see in the black bull-like head of the fallen Statue any far-off likeness of one who was rising out yonder in the world, crowned with horrible laurel, and shod with sandals of blood! One might have thought so; for he bent over it in fascination, dimly tracing its lineaments in the feeble green light that trembled from the

Water-cave. It was shapen like a colossal human thing, and one might almost have regarded it as the corpse of what once was a man—nay, an Emperor! But, thank God, the breath of life could never fill those marble veins, the light of power could never gleam upon that pitiless carven face!

When he came out into the open air, it was sunset, and the light dazzled and blinded him. The cold and mildew and darkness of that dead world still lay upon him, and he shivered from head to foot. Passing out by the Cathedral, and ascending the stairs of St. Triffine, he made his way slowly along the summit of the crags. The western sky was purple-red and dashed with shadows of the bluff March wind that was to blow next morrow; but now, all was still as a summer eve. A thick carpet of gold and green was spread beneath his feet, the broom was blazing golden on every side, and one early star, like a primrose, was already blossoming in the still cool pastures of Heaven. He seemed to have arisen from the tomb, and to be floating in divine air. That dead

world *was*, he knew; no less surely did he know that this living world is too—

“A calm, a happy, and a holy world !”

Yet He who made the tiger makes the lamb, and the same strange Hand that set that star up yonder, and wrote on the human breast, “Love one another,” moulded the iron hearts of a hundred Cæsars, and once more liberated Bonaparte.







## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE LAST CHANCE.

**A**S he passed the door of the Chapel of Notre Dame de la Garde, a figure emerged, and turned upon him a face full of horror and despair. It was his mother ; gaunt, white, terror-stricken, she looked fearfully around her, and clutched him by the arm. He saw her message in her face before she spoke.

“Fly, Rohan,” she cried ; “they are out after thee again, and they are searching from house to house. There is terrible news. The Emperor is in Paris and war is proclaimed.”

The world darkened—he staggered and held his hand upon his heart. He had ex-

pected this, but it nevertheless came upon him as the lightning from Heaven.

“Come into the Chapel!” he cried, suiting the action to the word.

Crossing the threshold they found the little building already full of the evening shadows. All was as it had been not long ago, when the lovers, after first plighting their happy troth, knelt before the altar. The figure of the Virgin stood at the altar, and the votive gifts still lay undisturbed at her feet; the sailors in the picture still drifted upon their raft, kneeling and fixing eyes on the luminous apparition that rose from the waters.

In a few rapid sentences, Mother Gwenfern gave further particulars of the situation:—The village was in a state of disturbance, the news of the Emperor’s complete triumph not being yet accepted by the Royalists in the neighbourhood; but a file of *gendarmes* from St. Gurlott had already appeared hunting up deserters “in the name of the Emperor.” Yes, that was certain, for they had searched her own house. The death of Pipriac was remembered, and was to be avenged.

In a few brief moments was undone the gentle work of months. The same light which Marcelle saw and feared in Rohan's face that night when he returned home, the same light which she had dreaded often since, when her lover was under the influence of strong excitement, now appeared there and shone with a lurid flame. The man's brain was burning; his heart seemed bursting. He did not speak, but laughed strangely to himself—hysterically, indeed, if we may apply the term to one of the male sex; but in his laugh there was something more than hysteria, than mere nervous tension: there was the sign of an incipient madness which threatened to overthrow the reason and wreck the soul.

“Rohan! Rohan!” cried the terrified woman clinging to him, “Speak? Do not look like that? They shall not take you, my Rohan!”

He looked at her without replying, and laughed again. Terrified at the expression in his face she burst into sobs and moans.

Late at night Corporal Derval sat at his

own hearth and read the journals to the widow and Marcelle. He was excited with the great news that had just come from Paris—that Europe refused to treat on amicable terms with the Usurper, and that the mighty hosts of the Great Powers were again rising like great clouds on the frontier. The Allied Congress sat at Frankfort, directing, as from the centre of a web, the movements of a million men. The Emperors of Russia and Austria, with the King of Prussia, had again taken the field. England had given her characteristic help in the shape of thirty-six millions of *money*, to say nothing of the small contingent of eighty thousand men, under the Duke of Wellington.

“The cowards!” hissed the Corporal between his clenched teeth. “A million of men against France and the Little Corporal; but you shall see, he will make them skip. I have seen a little fellow of a drummer thrash a great grenadier, and it will be like that!”

“There will be more war?” murmured the widow questioningly. And her poor heart

was beating to the tune of one sad word, her son's name, "Hoël! Hoël!"

"It is a fight for life, little woman," said Uncle Ewen with solemnity. "The Emperor must either kill these rascals, or himself be killed. Soul of a crow! there will be no quarter! They are fortifying Paris so that the enemy may never take it again by any stratagem. In a few days the Emperor will take the field." He added, with a smack of his lips, "It sounds like old times!"

Enter Gildas the one-armed, with his habitual military swagger. He had been quenching his thirst down at the *cabaret* (it was wonderful how thirsty a mortal he had become since his brief military experience), and his eyes were rather bloodshot.

"Has any one seen Rohan?" he said, standing before the fireplace. "They are after him out there!"

He jerked his thumb over his shoulder towards the door, which he had left open. With an uneasy glance at Marcelle, who sat pale and trembling, the Corporal replied—

"They called here, and I told them it

would be all right. Rohan can redeem his credit now and for ever, and save his skin at the same time. There is but one plan, and he had better take it without delay."

Marcelle looks up eagerly.

"And what is that, Uncle Ewen?"

"Soul of a crow! it is simple. The Emperor is in need of men—all the wolves of the world are against him—and he who helps him now, in time of need, will make amends for all the past. Let Rohan go to him, or what is the same thing, to the nearest station of the grand army, saying—'I am ready now to fight against the enemies of France;' let him take his place in the ranks like a brave man,—and all will be forgiven."

"I am not so sure," observed Gildas. "I have been having a glass with the gendarme Penvenn, old Pipriac's friend, and he says that Rohan will be shot in spite of his teeth; if so, it is a shame."

Uncle Ewen shifted nervously in his chair, and scowled at his nephew.

"Penvenn is an ass for his pains; do you think I have no influence with the Emperor?"

I tell you he will be pardoned if he will fight. What sayest thou, little one?" he continued, turning to Marcelle who seemed plunged in deep thought. "Or is thy lover still *un lâche*?"

"Uncle!" she cried with trembling lips.

"You are right, Marcelle, and I did him wrong; I forgot myself, and he is a brave man. But if he should fail us now!—now when Providence itself offers him a way to save himself, and to wipe the stain off the name he bears!—now when the Little Corporal needs his help, and would welcome him, like the Prodigal Son, into the ranks of the Brave!"

As Uncle Ewen ceased, Marcelle sprang to her feet with an exclamation; for there, standing in the chamber and listening to the speech, was Rohan himself—so changed already that he looked like an old man. It seemed as if the sudden shock had had the power to transform him to his former likeness of a famished hunted animal; to make his physical appearance a direct image of his tortured moral being. Gaunt and wild, with

great hungry-looking eyes gazing from one to another of the startled group, he stood in perfect silence.

“It is himself!” cried the Corporal gasping for breath. “Gildas, close the door.”

It was done, and, to make all secure, Gildas drew the bolt. The two women were soon by the side of Rohan; the widow weeping, Marcelle white and tearless. Uncle Ewen rose to his feet, and somewhat tremulously approached his nephew.

“Do not be afraid, *mon garz*,” he exclaimed; “they are after you, but I will make it all right, never fear. You have been refractory, but they will forgive all that when you step forward like a man. There is no time to lose. Cross the great marsh, and you will be at St. Gurlott before them. Go straight to the Rue Rose, and ask for the Capitaine Figuier, and tell him from me—Mother of God!” cried the old man, pausing in his hurried instructions, “is the man mad?”

Indeed the question seemed a very pertinent one, for Rohan, without seeming to hear



a word of what was being said, was gazing wildly at the air and uttering that strange unearthly laugh which had more than once before appalled Marcelle. Trembling with terror, the girl was clinging to his arm, and looking into his face.

“Rohan! Do you not understand! they are looking for you, and if you do not go in first, you will be killed!”

Turning his eyes upon her, he asked calmly enough, but in a strange hard voice—

“If I surrender, what then?”

“Why then,” broke in the Corporal, “it will be all forgotten. They will just give you your gun and knapsack, and you will join the grand army, and cover yourself with glory; and then, when the war is over—which will be very soon—back you will come like a brave man, and find my little Marcelle waiting for you, ready and willing to keep her troth.”

The old man spoke eagerly, and with a cheerfulness that he was far from feeling, for the look upon the other's face positively appalled him. Still with his eyes fixed on Marcelle, Rohan asked again—

“ If I do not surrender, what then ? ”

“ You will be shot,” answered the Corporal, “ like a dog ; but there—God knows you will not be so insane ! You will give yourself up, like a wise man and a brave.”

“ Is there no other way ? ” asked Rohan, still watching Marcelle.

“ None ! none ! You waste time, *mon garz !* ”

“ Yes, there is another,” said Rohan in the same hard voice, with the same look. Then, when all eyes were questioningly turned towards him, he continued—

“ If the Emperor should himself die ! If he should be killed ! ”

Uncle Ewen started back in terror.

“ Saints of Heaven forbid ! The very thought is treason ! ” he cried, trembling and frowning.

Without heeding his uncle, Rohan, who had never withdrawn his eyes one moment from Marcelle’s, said in a whisper, as if addressing her solely, and yet communicating mysteriously with himself, in a sort of dream—

“If one were to find him sleeping in the darkness alone, it would be a good deed! It would be one life instead of thousands, and then, look you, the world would be at peace!”

“Rohan!” cried Marcelle. “For the love of God!”

Well might she shrink from him in horror and agony, for the light of Murder was in his eyes. His face was distorted, and his hands clutched as at an invisible knife. The Corporal gazed on stupefied. He heard and dimly understood Rohan’s words. They seemed too execrable and awful to be the words of any one but a raving madman.

“Bones of St. Triffine!” murmured Gildas, “he is speaking of the Emperor!”

“Come from his side,” cried the Corporal to Marcelle; “he blasphemes—he is dangerous!”

Rohan turned his white face on the speaker.

“That is true; but I shall not harm *her*, or any here. Good night, Uncle Ewen—I am going.” And he moved slowly towards the door.

“Stay, Rohan!” cried Marcelle, clutching his arm. “*Whither* are you going?”

Without replying, he shook off her hold, and turned to the door, and in another moment he was gone. The Corporal uttered a despairing exclamation, and sank into his chair ; Gildas gave out a prolonged whistle, expressive of deep surprise ; the widow threw her apron over her head, and sobbed ; and Marcelle stood panting with her lips asunder, and her hand pressed hard upon her heart. So he left them, passing like a ghost out of sight. And when dawn came, and the emissaries of Bonaparte were searching high and low, no trace of him was to be found.





## CHAPTER XIX

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

**T**HE scene changes for a moment. Instead of the arid cliffs and green pastures of Kromlaix, scented with springtide and shining calmly by the side of the summer sea, we behold a dim prospect far inland, darkened with the drifting clouds of the rain. Through these clouds glide moving lights and shadows, passing slowly along the great highways: long processions that seem endless—columns of men that tramp wearily afoot, bodies of cavalry that move more lightly along, heavy masses of artillery, baggage-waggon, flotsam and jetsam of a great host. The air is full of a

deep, sea-like sound, broken at times by a rapid word of command, or a heavy roll of drums. All day the processions pass on, and when night comes they are still passing. Somewhere in the midst of them hovers the Spirit of all, silent and unseen as Death on his white steed.

The Grand Army is moving towards the frontier, and wherever it goes the fields of growing grain are darkened, and no song of the birds of spring is heard. The road is worn into deep ruts by the heavy wheels of cannon. In the village streets halt the cavalry, picketing their horses in the open square. The land is full of that deep murmur which announces and accompanies war. Slowly, league by league, the gleaming columns advance, obedient to the lifted finger that is pointing them on. In their rear, when the main body has passed by, flock swarms of human kites and crows—all those wretches who hover in the track of armies, seeking what refuse they may find to devour.

Among those who linger here and there in the track of the advancing columns, is

a man who, to judge from his appearance, seems to have emerged from the very dregs of human wretchedness; a gaunt, wild, savage, neglected-looking creature, who seems to have neither home nor kindred; and who, as a hooded crow follows huntsmen from hill to hill, watching for any prey they may overlook or cast aside, follows the dark procession moving forward to the seat of war. His hair hangs over his shoulders, his beard is long and matted, his feet and arms are bare, and the remainder of his body is wretchedly covered. Night after night he sleeps out in the open air, or in the shelter of barns and farm outbuildings, whence he is often driven by savage dogs and more savage men. He speaks French at times, but for the most part he mutters to himself in a sort of *patois* which few inhabitants of these districts can understand; and ever for those whom he accosts he has but one question: "Where is the Emperor? Will he pass this way?"

All who see him treat him as a maniac, and mad indeed he is, or seems. Dazed by the

vast swarms that surround him and ever pass him by; swept this way and that by their violence as they flow like great rivers through the heart of the land; ever perceiving with wild, anxious eyes the living torrents of faces that rush by him on their headlong course, he wanders stupefied from day to day. That he has some distinct object is clear from the firm-set face and fixed determined eyes; but wafted backward and forward by the stream of life, he appears helpless and irresponsible. How he lives it is difficult to tell. He never begs, but many out of pity give him bread, and sometimes the officers throw him small coins as they ride by, radiant and full of hope. He looks famished, but it is spiritual famine, not physical, that is wearing him away.

More than once he is seized for theft, and then driven away with blows. On one occasion he is taken as a spy, his hands are tied behind him, and he is driven into the presence of a grizzly commander, who stands smoking by a bivouac fire. Hastily condemned to be shot, he gives so strange a



laugh that the closer attention of his captors is attracted to his condition, and finally, with scornful pity, he is set at liberty to roam where he will.

As the armies advance, he advances, but lagging ever in the rear. Still his face looks backward, and he whispers—"The Emperor—when will he come?"

How golden waves the corn in these peaceful Belgian fields! How sweet smells the hay down there in the flat meads through which the silvern river runs, lined on each side by bright green pollard trees! How deep and cool lie the woods on the hill-sides, overhung with lilac and the wild rose, and carpeted with hyacinths and violets, blue as Heaven! How quietly the wind-mills turn, with their long arms against the blue sky!

But what is that gleaming in the distance there, under the village spire? It seems like a pool shining in the sun, but it is the clustered helmets of Prussian cuirassiers. And what is that dark mass moving like a shadow between the fields of wheat? It is

a body of Prussian infantry, advancing slowly along the dusty way. And hark now!—from the distance comes a murmur like the sound of an advancing sea, and from the direction whence it comes light cavalry trot up constantly, and solitary messengers gallop at full speed. The allied forces have already quietly occupied Belgium, and the French host at last is coming up.

It approaches and spreads out upon the fertile earth with some portion of its old strength. Sharp sounds of firing, and white wreaths of smoke rising here and there in the hollows, show that skirmishing has begun. The contending armies survey each other, like wild beasts preparing to spring and grapple.

All round them hover the human birds of prey, watchful and expectant, but the villages are deserted, the wind-mills cease to turn, and the happy sounds of pastoral industry are heard no more. The crops grow unwatched, and the cattle wander untended; only the chapel bell is sometimes heard, sounding the *Angelus* over deserted valleys.

Hush! far away in the direction of Quatre Bras sounds the heavy boom of cannon—thunder follows thunder, deep as the roar of the sea. Part of the armies have met, and a terrible struggle is beginning; cuirassiers gallop hither and thither along the roads. Groups of peasants gather here and there, preparing for flight and listening to the terrific sounds.

At the top of a woody hill stands the same woeful figure that we have seen before in the track of the Grand Army. Wild and haggard he seems still, like some poor wretch whom the fatal fires have burned out of house and home. He stands listening, and gazing at the road which winds through the valley beneath him. The rain is falling heavily, but he does not heed.

Suddenly, through the vaporous mist, appears the gleam of helmets and lances rapidly advancing; then the man discerns a solitary Figure on horseback coming at full gallop, followed by a group of mounted officers; behind these rolls a travelling carriage, drawn by four horses.

After pausing for a moment at the foot of the hill, the Figure gallops upward, followed by the others.

Quietly and silently the man creeps back into the shadow of the wood.





## CHAPTER XX.

### UNCLE EWEN GETS HIS FURLOUGH.

“**U**NCLE! uncle! look up, listen—there is brave news—there has been a battle and the Emperor is victorious—look up! It is I—Marcelle!”

The Corporal lay in his arm-chair as if asleep, but his eyes were wide open and he was breathing heavily. Coming hastily in one afternoon with the journal in her hand, Marcelle found him so, and, thinking at first that he slept, shook him gently. Then she screamed, perceiving that he was senseless and ill. The widow, hastily descending from upstairs where she had been busy,

came trembling to her assistance. They chafed his palms, threw cold water on his face, moistened his lips with brandy, but it was of no avail.

“He will die!” cried Marcelle, wringing her hands. “It is one of the old attacks, but worse than ever. Mother, hasten down and bring Plouët—he must be bled at once—Master Arfoll said that was the only way.”

The widow hesitated: then she cried—

“Had I not better run for the Priest?”

Poor soul, her first fear was that her brother-in-law might be hurried into the presence of his Maker before he could be properly bled and “anointed.” But Marcelle, more worldly and practical, insisted that Plouët should be first sent for; it would be time enough to prepare for the next world when all hopes of preserving him for this one were fled.

In a very short time the little barber appeared, armed with all the implements of office, and performed with his usual skill the solemn mystery of bleeding. The operation over, he shook his head. “The blood flows

feebly," he said; "he is very weak, and it is doubtful if he will recover."

Not until he was undressed and placed in bed, did the Corporal open his eyes and look around him. He nodded to Plouët, and tried to force a smile, but it was sad work. When Marcelle knelt weeping by his bedside, he put his hand gently on her head, while the tears rose in his eyes and made them dim.

"Cheer up, neighbour!" said Plouët. "How are we now? Better, eh?—well, I will tell you something that will do you good. Our advanced guard has met the Prussians at Charleroi, and has thrashed them within an inch of their lives."

Uncle Ewen's eye kindled, and his lips uttered an inarticulate sound.

"It is true, Uncle Ewen!" sobbed Marcelle, looking fondly at him.

"That is good news," he murmured presently, in a faint voice; then he sank back upon his pillow and closed his eyes, with a heavy sigh.

The excitement of the last few weeks had been too much for him. Day after day he

had overstrained his strength, stumping up and down the village, and assuming to a certain extent his old sway. Do what he might, he could not remain calm. His pulse kept throbbing like a roll of drums, and his ears were pricked up as if to listen for trumpet sounds in the distance. All the world was against the "Little Corporal," and the "Little Corporal," God willing, was about to beat all the world! His own pride and expectation were at stake in the matter, for with the fortunes of the Emperor his own fortunes rose and fell. When his master was a despised prisoner, he too was despised—his occupation gone, his life a burthen to him, since he coveted respect in his sphere and could not endure contradiction. It had almost broken his heart. But when the Emperor re-emerged, like the sun from a cloud, Uncle Ewen partook his glory, and recovered caste and position; men were afraid then to give him the lie, and to deny those things which he deemed holy. Proud and happy, he resumed his sceptre, though with a feebler hand, and waved down all opposition



both at home and at the *cabaret*. Joy, however, is "dangerous" in more senses than one, and the excess of his exultation had only heightened that constitutional malady to which he was a martyr.

In the agony of this new sorrow, Marcelle almost forgot the anxiety which had been weighing on her heart for many days. Nothing had been heard of Rohan since his departure, and no man could tell whether he was living or dead; so her mind was tortured on his account, and her nights were broken, and her days were full of pain. All she could do was to pray that the good God would guard her lover's person and bring him back to his right mind.

From this last attack Uncle Ewen did not emerge as freely as on former occasions. He kept his bed for days, and seemed hovering on the brink of death. He would not hear, however, of sending for Father Rolland, whose Royalist proclivities had aroused his strongest indignation. However much he had liked the little *cure* personally, he felt that he was unfaithful to a

great cause, and that in his heart he hated the Emperor.

Even while in bed he persisted in having the journals read to him; fortunately for him, they contained only "good news." When, about a week after his first attack, he was able to be dressed and to sit by the fireside, he still sent diligently to inquire after the latest bulletins from the seat of war.

To him, as he sat thus, entered one day Master Arfoll. At first, Marcelle, who sat by, trembled to see him, but Uncle Ewen seemed so pleased at his appearance that her fears were speedily dispelled. She watched him anxiously, however, ready to warn him should he touch on forbidden topics. But Master Arfoll was not the man to cause any fellow-creature unnecessary pain, and he knew well how to humour the fancies of the Corporal. When he went away that day, Uncle Ewen said quietly, as if speaking to himself—

"I was unjust: he is a sensible fellow."

Next day Master Arfoll came again, and sat for a long time chatting. Presently

the conversation turned on politics, and Uncle Ewen, feeble as he was, began to mount his hobby. So far from contradicting him, Master Arfoll assented to all his propositions. Only a great man, he admitted, could win so much love and kindle so much enthusiasm. He himself had seen the Emperor, and no longer wondered at the affection men felt for him. Ah, yes, he was a great man !

Marcelle scarcely knew how it came to pass, but that day Master Arfoll was reading aloud to Uncle Ewen out of the Bible which he used for teaching purposes ; and reading out of the New Testament, not the Old. Uncle Ewen would doubtless have relished to hear the recital of some of those martial episodes which fill the Old Books, but, nevertheless, the quiet peaceful parables of Jesus pleased him well.

“After all,” said Master Arfoll as he closed the book, “War is a terrible thing, and Peace is best.”

“That is quite true,” replied the Corporal ; “but War, look you, is a necessity.”

“Not if men would love one another.”

Uncle Ewen smiled grimly, the very ghost of his old smile.

“Soul of a crow! how can one love one’s enemies? . . . Those Prussians! those English!”

And he ground his teeth angrily, as if he would have liked to worry and tear them. Master Arfoll sighed, and quietly dropt the subject.

When he had said *au revoir* and passed across the threshold, he heard Marcelle’s voice close behind him.

“Master Arfoll,” said the girl in a quick low voice, “do you think he will die?”

“I cannot tell. . . He is very ill!”

“But will he recover?”

The schoolmaster paused in thought before he replied.

“He is not a young man, and such shocks are cruel. I do not think he will live long.” He added gently, “There is no word of your cousin?”

She answered in the negative, and sadly returned into the house.

That very night there was considerable excitement in the village; groups of Bonapartist enthusiasts paced up and down the streets, singing and shouting. News had come of the battle of Ligny, and the triumph of the French arms now seemed certain.

"It is true, uncle," said Gildas, entering tipsily into the kitchen. "The Little One has thrashed those brutes of Prussians at last, and he will next devour those accursed English."

"Where is the journal?" asked Uncle Ewen, trembling from head to foot and reaching out his hands.

Gildas handed it over, and the Corporal, putting on his horn spectacles, began to read it through. But the letters swam before his eyes, and he was compelled to entrust the task to Marcelle, who in a clear voice read the news aloud. When she had done, his eyes were dim with joy and pride.

That night he could not sleep, and before dawn he began to wander.

It was clear that some great change for the worse had taken place. He tossed upon his pillow, talked to himself, mentioned the

names of old comrades, and spoke frequently of the Emperor. Suddenly he sprang up, and began scrambling out of bed.

"It is the *réveille!*" he cried, gazing vacantly around him.

The voice of Marcelle, who was up and watching, seemed to recall him partially to himself, and he sank back quietly upon his pillow. Ever and anon after that, he would start up nervously, as if at a sudden call.

Early in the morning Master Arfoll came and sat by his side, but he did not recognise him. The schoolmaster, who had no little skill in such cases, pronounced his condition to be critical, and, upon hearing this, Mother Derval persisted in sending for the priest. When Father Rolland arrived he found Uncle Ewen quite incapable of profiting by any holy offices.

"I fear he is dying," said Master Arfoll.

"And without the last sacrament," moaned the widow.

"He shall have it," said Father Rolland, "if he will only understand. Look up, my Corporal. It is I, Father Rolland!"

But Uncle Ewen's soul was far away—out on a great battle-field, in sight of smoking villages and fiery towns, watching the great columns of armies moving to and fro, while a familiar figure in cocked hat and grey overcoat sat silent as stone on horseback, watching from an eminence! Over and over again he repeated in his mind that wonderful episode of Cismone. He talked of Jacques Monier, and, stretching out his open hands over the coverlet, fancied he was warming them over the bivouac fire. Sometimes his face flashed, as he fancied himself in the grand *mêlée* of battle, and he cried out in a loud voice, "No quarter!" The summer sun shone brightly in upon him, as he lay thus full of his ruling passion.

Marcelle, quite heart-broken, sobbed at his bedside, while the widow spent all her minutes in fervent prayer. Gildas stood on the hearth quite subdued, and ready to blubber like a great boy. On one side of the bed sat Master Arfoll; on the other, the little Priest.

"He has been a brave man," said Father Rolland, "but an enthusiast, look you, and

this affair of Ligny has got into his head. He has been a good servant to the Emperor and to France!"

It seemed as if the very name of the Emperor had a spell to draw the Corporal from his swoon, for all at once he opened his eyes, and looked straight at the Priest. He did not seem quite to recognise him, and turning his face towards Master Arfoll, he smiled—so faintly, so sadly, that it tore Marcelle's heart to see him.

"Uncle Ewen! Uncle Ewen!" she sobbed, holding his hand.

"Is it thou, little one?" he murmured faintly. "What was it that thou wast reading about a great Battle?"

She could not answer for sobs, and Father Rolland interposed, speaking rapidly—

"It is no time to think of battles now, my Corporal, for you are very ill and will soon be in the presence of your God. I have come to give you the last sacrament, to prepare your soul for the change that is about to come upon it. There is no time to lose. Make your peace with Heaven!"



Quietly all withdrew from the kitchen, leaving the little *curé* alone with his sick charge. There was a long interval, during which the hearts of the two women were sick with anxiety; then Father Rolland called them all back into the chamber. Uncle Ewen was lying quietly on his pillow with his eyes half closed, and on the bed beside him lay the crucifix and the priest's breviary.

"It is finished," said the little *curé*; "he is not quite clear in his head, and he did not recognise me, but God is good, and it will suffice. His mind is now calm, and he is prepared to approach, in a humble and peaceful spirit, the presence of his Maker!"

"Amen," cried the widow, with a great load off her mind.

At that moment, while they were approaching the bedside, the Corporal opened his eyes and gazed around him. His look was no longer vacant, but quite collected. Suddenly his eyes fell upon the face of Father Rolland; now, for the first time, he recognised him, and a faint flush came into his dying face—

“*A bas le Bourbon!*” he cried, “VIVE L’EMPEREUR!”

And with that war-cry upon his lips he drifted out to join the great bivouac of the armies of the dead.





## CHAPTER XXI.

BONAPARTE.

**S**OME back now to the golden valleys where the bloody struggle of armies is beginning; to the verge of the dark wood into which crept that pitiable outcast man. As the man retreats into hiding, the figure on horseback reaches the hill summit, dismounts, and stands looking in the direction of Ligny. The rain pours down upon him, but he too is heedless of the rain. Spurred and booted, wrapt in an old grey overcoat, and wearing a cocked hat from which the rain drips heavily, he stands wrapt in thought, posed, with his hands clasped behind his back, his

head sunk deep between his shoulders. His staff follow, and stand in groups behind him and close to him.

The heavy sound of cannon continues, rolling in the far distance. Presently it ceases, and the Figure is still there, looking in the direction whence it comes. He paces up and down impatiently, but his eyes are fixed now on the rainy road. Suddenly on the road appears the figure of a mounted officer, galloping bareheaded as if for dear life. He sees the group on the height above him and gallops up. In a few minutes he is in the presence of the Emperor.

Bonaparte sees good tidings in the officer's face, but he opens and reads the despatch which he brings ; then he smiles, and speaks rapidly to those surrounding him ; in another moment he is encircled by a flash of swords, and there is a cry of *Vive l'Empereur !* The Prussians are in retreat from Ligny ; the first blow of the war is victory !

Without attempting to mount again, the Emperor walks quietly down the hill. . . .

. . . When all again is still, the man creeps

out of the wood; he is trembling now and shivering, and his eyes are more wild and hungry than ever. He hastens along, like an animal that keeps close to the ground. He sees the bright group moving along the foot of the hill, but he creeps along the summit. The rain pours down in torrents, and the prospect is darkening towards fall of night.

Still following the line of the wooded hill-tops, the man runs, now fleet as a deer, through the shadows of the deepening darkness. He meets no human soul. At last he pauses, close to a large building erected on the hill-side and looking down on long reaches of fertile pasture and yellow corn. It is one of those antique farms so common in Belgium—a quaintly gabled dwelling surrounded by barns, byres, and fruit gardens. But no light burns in any of the windows, and it seems temporarily deserted, save for a great starved dog that prowls around it, and flies moaning at the man's approach.

The man pauses at the open door and looks down the hill. Suddenly he is startled

by the sound of horses' feet rapidly approaching; there is a flash, a gleam in the darkness, and a body of cavalry gallop up. Before they reach the door, he has plunged across the threshold.

Within all is dark, but he gropes his way across the great kitchen and into a large inner chamber dimly lit by two great window casements. In the centre stands a ladder leading to a small dark hay-loft, but the room is comfortably furnished with rude old-fashioned chairs and table, and has in one corner a great fire-place of quaintly carved oak. It is obvious that the place has been lately occupied, for on the table is a portion of a loaf with some coarse cheese. Great black rafters stretch overhead, and above them is the opening of the loft.

There is a tramp of feet and a sound of voices; the soldiers are entering the house, and approaching the room. Swift as thought the man runs up the ladder, and disappears in the darkness of the loft above.

An officer enters, followed by attendants bearing a lamp. He looks round the empty

room, takes up the fragment of bread, and laughs; then he gives some orders rapidly, and in a few moments they bring in an armful of wood and kindle a fire on the hearth. As they do so, their soaking clothes steam. Suddenly there comes from without the sound of more horses galloping, of voices rapidly giving the word of command. The farm is surrounded on every side by troops, and the rooms within begin to fill. The fire burns up on the hearth of the large inner chamber, and the air becomes full of a comfortable glow. Meantime the rain falls in torrents, with occasional gleams of summer lightning.

Entering bareheaded, attendants now place on the table a small silvern lamp, and draw close the great moth-eaten curtains which cover the two antique casements. They speak low, as if in awe of some superior presence. All at once, through the open door, comes a familiar Figure, who wears his cocked hat on his head, and has his grey overcoat still wrapt around him. It is the Emperor of France.

He casts off the dripping overcoat and stands in simple general's uniform, warming his hands at the fire. They bring in plain bread and wine, which they set before him on the table. He breaks a little of the bread and drinks some of the wine; then he speaks rapidly in a clear low voice, and, glancing round the chamber, motions his attendants to withdraw. They do so deferentially, closing the door softly behind them. He is left entirely alone.

Alone in the great chamber, with the black rafters stretching over his head dimly illumed by the red glare of the fire and the faint gleam of the lamp. All is so silent that he can hear the pattering of the rain-drops on the great casements, and on the roof above. Although the place is surrounded by troops their movements are very hushed and still, and, save for a low murmur of voices from the outer rooms, there is no human sound. But overhead, buried in the blackness, a wild face watches and looks down.

Slowly, with chin drooping forward on his



breast, and hands clasped upon his back, he paces up and down. The sentinel pacing to and fro beyond the window is not more methodical in his march than he. The rain pours without and the wind moans, but he hears nothing; he is too attentively listening to the sound of his own thoughts. What sees he?—what hears he? Before his soul's vision great armies pass in black procession, moving like storm-clouds on to some bourne of the inexorable will; burning cities rise in the distance, like the ever-burning towers of Hell; and the roar of far-off cannon mingles with the sound of the breakers of Eternity thundering on a starry shore. For this night, look you, of all nights, the voice of God is with the man, bringing dark prescience of some approaching doom. Mark how the firelight plays upon his cheeks, which are livid as those of a corpse! See how the eagle eye sheathes itself softly, as if to close upon the sorrow pent within! It is night, and he is alone—alone with the shadows of Sleep and Death. Though he knows his creatures are waking in the

chambers beyond, and that his armies are stretching all round him on the rainy plain, he is nevertheless supremely solitary. The darkness seems a cage, from which his fretful mind would willingly escape; he paces up and down, eager for the darkness to uplift and disclose the stormy dawn.

All his plans are matured, all his orders are given; he is but resting for a few brief hours before he takes the victory for which his soul so long has waited. Victory?—ah, yes, that is certain!—his lurid star will not fail at last to dart blinding beams into the eyes of his enemies!—like a destroying angel he will arise, more mighty and terrible than he ever yet has been!—they think they have him in a net, but they shall see!

He walks to the window, and peers out into the night. Although it is summer, all is dark and cold and chill. As he stands for a moment gazing forth, he hears low sounds from the darkness around him; sounds as of things stirring in sleep. The measured foot-falls of the sentries, the tramp of horses' feet, the cry of voices giving and receiving the

password of the night, all come upon his ear like murmurs in a dream. He draws the curtain, and comes forward again into the fire-light, which wraps him from head to foot like a robe of blood. The great black rafters of the roof stretch overhead, and as something stirs among them, his dead-white face looks up. . . . A rat crawling from its hole and running along the beam—that is all.

Again he begins his monotonous march up and down.

There is a knock at the door. "Enter," he says, in a low clear voice ; and an aide-de-camp enters, bareheaded, with a despatch. He tears it open, runs his eye over it, and casts it aside without a word. As the aide-de-camp is returning he calls him back. Unless important despatches arrive let no one disturb him for the next two hours ; for he will sleep.

The door is gently closed, and he is again alone in the chamber. He stands upon the hearth, and for a long time seems plunged in deep reflection—his lips firmly set, his brow knitted. Presently he approaches the table,

again takes up the despatch, looks it through, then once more places it aside. Unloosening his neckerchief from his throat, he approaches the old arm-chair of oak, which is set before the fire. And now—merciful God! what is this? He has sunk upon his knees.

To pray? He?

Yes; here, in the loneliness of the night, quite unconscious that he is watched by any human eyes, he secretly kneels, covers his eyes, and prays. Not for long; after a minute he rises, and his face is wonderfully changed—softened and sweetened by the religious light that has shone upon it for a little space. No little child rising from saying “Our Father,” by an innocent bedside, could look more calm; yet doubtless he prayed for “victory,” that his enemies might be blotted from the face of the earth, that God might once more cement his throne with blood and forge his sceptre of fire. “The pity of it, Iago; oh! the pity of it!” Wise was he who said that “the wicked are only poor blind children, who know not what they do.”

At last, throwing himself into the arm-

chair, he lies back, and quietly closes his eyes.

To sleep? Can he, on whose head rests the fate of empires, sleep this night? As easily and as soundly as a little child! The constant habit of seeking slumber under all sorts of conditions—out in the dark rain, on the bare ground, in the saddle, in the travelling-carriage—has made sleep his slave. Scarcely has he closed his eyes when the blessed dew falls upon them. And yet, O God, at this very hour, how many good men are praying for the rest that will not come!

As he sits there with his chin drooping upon his breast, his jaw falling heavily, and his eyes half open yet glazed and sightless, one might fancy him a corpse—so livid is his cheek, so wan and wild his look. All the dark passions of the man, his buried cares and sorrows, which the waking will crushed down, now flow up to the surface and tremble there in ghastly lights and shades. He seems to have cast off his strength, like a raiment only worn by day. Great God, how old he looks! how pitiably old and human!

One sees now, or one might see, that his hair is tinged with grey ; it falls in thin straggling lines upon his forehead, which is marked deep with weary lines. This is he who to half a weeping world has seemed like God ; who has let loose the angels of his wrath, swift as the four winds, to devastate the earth ; who has stood as a shadow between man's soul and the sun which God set up in heaven in the beginning, and who has swept as lightning to scorch up the realms of emperors and kings. God "giveth His beloved sleep!" And to those He loves *not*?—Sleep too! This is Napoleon—a weary man, grey-haired and very pale ; he slumbers sound, and scarcely seems to dream. All over the earth lie poor guilty wretches, wailing miserably, conscience-stricken because they have taken life—in passion, in cruelty, in wrath ; the Eye is looking at them as it looked at Cain, and they cannot sleep. This man has waded in blood up to his armpits ; yea, the blood he has shed is as a river rushing up to stain the footstool of the Throne of God. Yet he slumbers like a child!

The fire burns low, but it still fills the room with a dim light, which mingles with the rays of the lamp upon the table. Up among the black rafters all is dark ; but what is that stirring there and gazing down ? The black loft looms above, and the ladder rests against the topmost beams. Something moves up there, a shadow among the shadows. Swift as lightning, and as silent, something descends ;—it is the figure of a man.





## CHAPTER XXII.

“SIC SEMPER TYRANNUS.”

**T**HE Emperor moans in his sleep, which is easily disturbed, but he does not quite waken. The figure crouches for a moment in the centre of the floor; then crawling forward, and turning towards the sleeper, it approaches him without a sound, for its feet are naked. It rises erect, revealing a face so wild and strange as to seem scarcely human, but rather to resemble the lineaments of an apparition. The hair, thickly sown with white, streams down over half-naked shoulders; the cheeks are sunken as with famine or disease; the lips lie apart, like the mouth of some panting wild animal.



The form seems gigantic, looming in the dim light of the lamp—and it is wrapt from head to foot in hideous rags.

As the creature crawls towards the sleeping Emperor, something gleams in his hands ; it is a long bayonet-like knife, such as hunters use in the Forest of Ardennes. His eyes burn with strange light, fixing themselves upon the sleeper. If this is an assassin, then surely that sleeper's time is come !

And now, knife in hand, he stands close to the Emperor, looking upon his face, and reading it line by line ; as he does so, his own gleams spectre-like and wild and mad. His gaze is full of spiritual famine ; he seems as he looks to satisfy some passionate hunger. His eyes come closer and closer, charmed towards the object on which they gaze, until his breath could almost be felt upon the cold white cheek. Simultaneously the knife is raised, as if to strike home to the sleeper's heart.

At this moment the sleeper stirs, but still does not waken, for he is thoroughly exhausted with many hours of vigil, and his sleep is unusually heavy. If he but knew

how near his sleep is to death! He has climbed to the summit of earthly glory; he has chained to the footstool of his throne all the Kings of the earth; and is this to be the end? To be slaughtered miserably at midnight by an assassin's steel.

There is a movement as of feet stirring in the outer chamber; then the voice of the sentry is heard crying, "*Qui vive*," and all is still again. The wild figure pauses, listening, still with large eyes fixed upon the sleeper's face. . . .

Still stars of eternity, gleaming overhead in the azure arch of heaven, look down this night through the mundane mist and rain, and behold, face to face, these two creatures whom God made. Spirit of Life, that movest upon the air and upon the deep, enwrap them with the mystery of Thy breath; for out of Thee each came, and unto Thee each shall return! Which is Imperial now? The gigantic creature towering there with wild face in all the power of maniac strength, or the feeble form that lies open to the fatal blow that is to come? Behold these two children

of primæval Adam, each with the flesh, blood, heart, and soul of a man ; each miraculously made, breathing the same air, feeding on the same earthly food ; and say, which is Abel ? which is Cain ? The look of Cain is on the face of him who stands erect and grips the knife—the look of Cain when he overthrew the altar and prepared to strike down his lamb-like brother in God's sight. . . . Yet so surely as those stars shine in heaven, it is the wretched Abel who hath arisen, snatching, mad with despair, the fratricidal knife !

Feature by feature, line by line, he reads the Emperor's face. His gaze is fixed and awful, his face still preserves its ashen pallor. His maniacal abstraction is no less startling than his frightful physical strength. He hears a sentry approach the window and pause for a moment, and the knife is lifted mechanically as if to strike ; but the sentry passes by, and the knife is dropped. Then he again catches a movement from the ante-chamber. Perhaps they have heard sounds, and are approaching. No ; all again is still.

How soundly the Emperor sleeps ! The

lamplight illumines his face and marks its weary lines, while the firelight casts a red glow round his reclining form. There is no Imperial grandeur here—only a weary wight, tired, like any peasant dozing by the hearth; only a weak, sallow, sickly creature, whom a strong man could crush down with a blow of the hand. One hand lies on the arm of the chair—it is white and small like a woman's or a child's; yet is it not the hand that has struck down Christ and the Saints, and cast blood upon the shrines of God? Is it not the hand of Cain, who slew his brother?

And now, O assassin, since such thou art, strike home! It is thy turn now. Thou hast waited and watched on wearily for this—thou hast prayed madly to God and to Our Lady of Hate that this moment might come—and lo! the Lord has put thine enemy, the enemy of thee and of thy kind, into thine hand. Kill, kill, kill! This is Napoleon, whose spirit has gone forth, like Cain's, to blight and make bloody the happy homes of earth, who has wandered from east to west knee deep in blood, who has set on every land his seal of

flame, who has cast on every field, where once the white wheat grew, the bones of Famine and the ashes of Fire. Remember D'Enghien, Pichegru, Palm; and kill! Remember Jena, Eylau; and kill! Dost thou hesitate? Then, remember Moscow! Remember the Beresina, choked up with its forty thousand dead! Remember the thousands upon thousands sleeping in the great snows!—and kill, kill, kill!

Dost thou doubt that this is he, that thou hesitatest so long? Thy face is tortured, and thy hand trembles, and thy soul is faint. Thou camest hither to behold a Shadow, an Image, a thing like that Form of black marble set up as a symbol in the dark earth. Far away the Emperor seemed colossal, unreal, inhuman: a portent with the likeness of a fiend. To that thou didst creep, thinking to grapple with the Execrable. And now thou art disarmed, because thou seest only a poor pale weary *Man!*

Think of thy weary nights and famished days; and kill! Think of the darkness that has come upon thy life, of the sorrow that

has separated thee from all thou lovest best—think too of the millions who have cried even as sheep driven to the slaughter; and kill! He had no pity; do thou have none. Remember, it is this one life against the peace and happiness of Earth. Obliterate this creature, and Man perhaps is saved. If he awakens again, war will awaken!—Fire, Famine, and Slaughter, will awaken too! Kill, kill! . . .

. . . The sleeper stirs once more, his glazed eyes half open, and his head rolls to one side. His face preserves a marble pallor, but is lit by a strange sad smile. He murmurs to himself, and his small hand opens and shuts—like a child's little hand that clutches at the butterfly in sleep, when—

“One little wandering arm is thrown  
At random on the counterpane,  
And oft the fingers close in haste  
As if their childish owner chased  
The butterfly again.”

A crown or a butterfly!—is it not all one?  
And in God's eyes, perchance, he who sleeps  
here is only a poor foolish child!

Be that as it may, God has drawn round the sleeper's form a circle which thou canst not pass. Thine indeed is not the stuff of which savage assassins are made, and though there is madness in thy brain, there is still love in thine heart. Kill thou canst not *now*, though thou camest to kill. Lost as thou art, thou feelest no hate even for thine enemy, now; thou knowest indeed how poor and frail a creature thou hast been fearing and hating so long. God made him and God sent him; bloody as he is, he too is God's child.

Perhaps if he had not *prayed* before he slept it might have been easier; but he did pray, and his face became beautiful for the moment, and fearlessly as a child he sank to rest. Wilt thou kill what God has sanctified with His sleep? Because this creature has broken the sacraments of Nature, wilt thou become as he? No; thou hast seen him and thou knowest him—that is enough—thou wilt leave him in the hands of God. . . .

Amen! Safely and justly mayest thou so leave him, for the vengeance of God is

sure, as the mercy of God is deep. One spectre of a slain man comes to thee nightly in dream ; how many come to *him* ? Perhaps not one, though at his bidding thousands upon thousands have been miserably slain. Yet be thou assured, though no ghosts rise, the Spirit of Life will demand an account. Look again at the closed Imperial eyes ! See the cold light sleeping deep and pitiless on that face that ruled a world ! To those dead eyes, cold as a statue's stony orbs, thou, poor wretch, hast been offered up by a world grown mad like thee. As an Idol on a pedestal, as an Idol of stone with dull dumb stare surveying its worshippers, this man has stood aloft supremely crowned. Not while he stood up there, could the Spirit of Life find him ; not till the hands of man have cast him down, shall the Spirit of Love chasten him and turn him back to flesh . . . When men go by the place where the Idol is lying low, and murmur, beholding it broken upon the ground, " This was Napoleon ! the thing we wondered at and worshipped for a time ! " and smiling turn away, *then* perhaps in the



cold breast the human heart shall beat more freely, humbled and awe-stricken before its Maker. . . .

. . . Turn, poor wretch, ere thou goest, and look again. There sleeps on that Imperial face no loving living light, but an inward eating fire—a fire consuming and destroying and redeeming in its own despite the soul on which it feeds. He who hath had no mercy for mankind shall learn the bitter lesson of self-mercy, and, realising his own utter loneliness and pain, yearn outward to the woes of all the world. And in that hour this cold light thou beholdest shall spread through all his spirit, and become as that mad sorrow and despair which lights now those wretched eyes of thine. Leave him then to God, and go thy way. . . .

. . . The man no longer holds the knife. On silent naked feet he has withdrawn back towards the great inner casement of the chamber. For a moment he pauses with one last look—trembling like one who, having plunged into a raging sea, is suddenly uplifted by the hair, and gazing with wild eyes

and quivering lips on the pale Imperial face. Then he draws back the heavy curtain, and, dashing open the great window, leaps out into the darkness.

There is a loud cry in the distance, then the sound of shots, then a tramp of feet,—and silence. The man has disappeared as he came, like a ghost of the night.

Meanwhile, the sleeper, startled by the sounds, has sprung up in his chair. As he stands trembling and looking round him, there lies in the gloom at his feet a huge naked knife, such as hunters use; but he sees it not, and little dreams that such a weapon only a few minutes since was pointed at his own heart. His attendants enter anxiously and find the window open, but no clue as to what hand threw it wide. The hero of a hundred battles shivers, for he is superstitious, but he cannot help them to an explanation.

But now—to horse! He has rested too long, and it will soon be dawn. . . . Drums beat and trumpets sound, as he rides on through the dark night, his heavy travelling

carriage, surrounded by lancers, lumbering behind. Leave him still to God. . . . Close before him, clouding the lurid star of his destiny, rises the blood-red shadow—  
WATERLOO.





## EPILOGUE.

**A** YEAR has passed away. The yellow lamps of the broom are again burning on the crags; the flocks of sea-birds have come from the south to whiten the great sea-wall; the corn is growing golden inland, and the lark, poised over the murmuring farms, is singing loud; while the silvern harvest of the deep is growing too, and the fishermen creep from calm to calm, gathering it up in their brown nets. The sea is calm as glass, and every crag is mirrored in it from base to brow. It is the anniversary of the great battle which decided fatally the destinies of Bonaparte.

On the summit of the cliff immediately overlooking the Cathedral of St. Gildas sit two figures, gazing downward. Far below them, over the roofless Cathedral wall, hover flocks of gulls, and the still green sea, faintly edged with foam that does not seem to stir, is approaching the red granite Gate of St. Gildas. Away beyond, further than eyes can see, stretches the Ocean, faintly shaded by the soft grey mists of Heaven.

One figure, very gaunt and tall, sits like a statue, with large grey eyes turned seaward; his hair is quite grey and flows on to his shoulders, his face is marked with strange furrows, left by some terrible sorrow or terror that has passed away. The other figure, that of a beautiful young girl, sits just below him, holding his hand and looking up into his face. She wears a dark dress and saffron coif, both signs of mourning, and her face is very pale.

Day after day, in the golden summer weather, the two come here and sit for hours in silence and in peace. Day by day the

girl watches for the passing away of the cloud which obscures the soul of her companion. He seems—why, she knows not—to derive a strange solace from merely sitting here, holding her hand, and contemplating the waters. His eyes seem vacant, but strange spiritual light still survives in their depths.

To-day, he speaks, not turning his gaze from the Sea.

“Marcelle!”

“Yes, Rohan!”

“If one could sail, and sail, and sail, out there, one would come to the rock where *he* is sitting, with the waves all round him. Sometimes I see him yonder, looking over the black waters. He is by himself, and his face looks white as it did when I saw it, before the great battle was fought!”

She gazes at him in troubled tenderness, her eyes dim with tears.

“Rohan, dear! of whom do you speak?”

He smiles but does not answer. His words are a mystery to her. Since the day

when, after long months of absence, he returned home a broken man, he has often spoken of wondrous things — of battles, of the Emperor, of strange meetings, but it has all seemed like witless wandering. She has been waiting wearily till the cloud should lift and all become clear ; and there seems hope, for day by day he has grown more peaceful and gentle, and now he can be guided like a child.

He is silent, still gazing seaward. Behind him rises the great Menhir, with the village lying far beneath. The sunlight falls above him and around him, clothing as with a white veil his figure and that of the gentle girl. All is not lost, for with his desolation her love has grown, and she herself remains to him, chastened, subdued, faithful unto death. . . .

. . . But he does not rave when he speaks of one who lingers in the waste out yonder. Far away, under a solitary palm-tree, sits another Form, waiting, watching, and dreaming, while the waters of the deep, sad and

strange as the waters of Eternity, stretch  
measureless around, and break with weary  
murmurs at his feet.

So sit those twain, thousands of miles  
    apart,  
Each, cheek on hand, gazing upon the  
    Sea!

THE END.



